

Report #1

Settlement experiences of recently arrived refugees from Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan in Queensland in 2018: Full Report

Professor Jock Collins
UTS Business School

Professor Carol Reid,
*WSU Centre for
Educational Research*

**Associate Professor
Dimitria Groutsis,**
USyd Business School

Dr Katherine Watson
UTS Business School

Dr Annika Kaabel
USyd Business School

Stuart Hughes
*WSU, Centre for
Educational Research*



Corresponding Author:

Katherine Watson

UTS Business School

katherine.watson@uts.edu.au

© 2019 University of Technology Sydney

ISBN Print: 978-1-86365-996-3

ISBN E-Book: 978-1-86365-997-0

Research Team

The research team consists of Professor Jock Collins (University of Technology Sydney), Professor Carol Reid (Western Sydney University), Associate Professor Dimitria Groutsis (University of Sydney), and research assistants Dr Katherine Watson (University of Technology Sydney), Dr Annika Kaabel (University of Sydney) and Stuart Hughes (Western Sydney University). The Australian Research Council (ARC) is funding the project as part of the Linkage Project Scheme for the period of 2017-2020.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all those who assisted in the fieldwork for this report. The project is being conducted in collaboration with Partner Investigators, including community organisations: Access Community Services Ltd, AMES Australia, Multicultural Development Australia (MDA) Ltd and Settlement Services International Ltd. We wish to thank our partners for their support and our international collaborators Germany, Sweden, Finland, the UK and New Zealand and the Canadian Government for their insights. We are also grateful to the ARC for their support¹. Without the assistance, knowledge and empathy of our bilingual research assistants – it is safe to say – this research would not have been possible. They assisted and accompanied us in all our interviews providing cultural and linguistic translations throughout the interview process for each of the community groups. Finally, we thank the informants, the refugee informants in Queensland, whose stories and experiences comprise the bulk of this report, schools, TAFE, and other stakeholders. Because of human research ethical safeguards and procedures, we do not name them in this report, but we are forever indebted to them for the warmth, friendliness and hospitality that they showed us and for the trust that they placed in us to tell their story.

Citation for this report

Collins, J., Reid, C., Groutsis, D., Watson, K., Kaabel, A., Hughes, S. 2019, *Settlement experiences of recently arrived refugees from Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan in Queensland in 2018: Full Report*, Centre for Business and Social innovation, UTS Business School: Sydney.

Cover illustration: 'Refugees Welcome' (Photo: Dimitria Groutsis, 2017)

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)

Contents

Abbreviations	ii
Executive Summary	2
Background	2
The Research.....	4
Key findings.....	6
1. Background	12
2. Context	13
3. Methodology	16
Survey collection and analysis.....	20
4. Refugee Informants in Queensland	21
5. Pre-Migration Stories	29
6. Coming to Australia	35
6.1 Language	36
6.1.1 Adults and the English language	36
6.1.2 Young people and the English language	42
6.2 Stories from adult refugees.....	46
6.2.1 Employment.....	46
6.2.2. Settlement.....	58
6.3 Stories from young refugees.....	73
6.3.1 Education	76
6.3.2 Settlement.....	78
7. Conclusion	84
8. References	92
Appendices	97
Appendix A: Semi-structured interview schedules	98
Appendix B: Surveys	100

Abbreviations

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACTA	Australian Council of TESOL Associations
AMEP	Adult Migrant English Program
ARC	Australian Research Council
BNLA	Building a New Life in Australia (The Longitudinal Study of Humanitarian Migrants)
BRA	Bilingual Research Assistant
CI	Chief Investigator
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
DSS	Department of Social Services
EAL/D	English as an Additional Language/Dialect
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
ISIS	Islamic State (militant group)
LGA	Local Government Area
MDA	Multicultural Development Association
MRC	Migrant Resource Centre
NGO	Non-government organisation
NSW	New South Wales
Qld	Queensland
SEE	Skills for Education and Employment
SME	Small and Medium Enterprises
SSI	Settlement Services International
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
TESOL	Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UTS	University Technology Sydney
USyd	University of Sydney
Vic	Victoria
WSU	Western Sydney University



Executive Summary



Executive Summary

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 are determined by Australia to have refugee status. Refugees were arriving on Australian shores seeking asylum prior to the Second World War. 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. Since that time – under Coalition and Labor governments – boat people have been pilloried as queue-jumpers unsuitable for life in Australia, as the boat people issue became a political football.

Much of the refugee debate in Australia is based on stereotypes, generalisations and pre-determined political ideology. We urgently need to reinsert evidence-based research about the settlement experiences and outcomes of recently-arrived refugees in Australia into this debate.

The present report is the first of three place-based reports on the outcomes of the first year of a three-year research project – funded by the Australian Research Council – examining the settlement, employment and education experiences and outcomes of recently-arrived Syrian Iraqi and Afghan refugees. It is a longitudinal study: we have interviewed 233 refugee families – 200 Syrian and Iraqi families and 33 Afghan families – and surveyed 632 individuals settling in New South Wales (NSW), Queensland (Qld) and Victoria (Vic).

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. These two groups were identified and targeted as in need of support because the Syrian conflict and the Islamic State (ISIS) persecution in Iraq displaced millions of refugees and generated unprecedented flows of refugees to Europe. Like the Canadian government, the Australian government opened its doors to Syrian-conflict refugees. 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 intake will further increase to 18,750 refugees in 2018-2019 (DSS 2019).

For the purposes of our study, we have conducted interviews and surveys with **Syrian** and **Iraqi** refugee families in order to evaluate the settlement outcomes of the Syrian-conflict intake. Since the eruption of the Syrian conflict in 2011 nearly seven million Syrians and Iraqis have fled the region seeking safety in neighbouring countries including Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey for instance; and beyond, including various countries in Europe, Australia and Canada. The Australian Government placed a priority on 'persecuted minorities who sought refuge from the conflict in Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey' (DFAT,

2015). Refugees were selected for settlement in Australia from either United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) camps or directly from urban communities in Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey (DFAT, 2017). Between 1 July 2015 and 31 December 2017, the number of Syrian and Iraqi refugees (mainly Christian) rose to 24,926 – the 12,000 plus Syrians and Iraqis who arrived in the annual humanitarian intake – with the majority settling in metropolitan areas in New South Wales and Victoria, followed by Queensland (Collins et al. 2018, 5).

We also interviewed and surveyed refugee families from **Afghanistan** (mainly Muslim) as a *control group* to provide an evaluation of the convergence and divergence between the services provided and settlement outcomes and experiences of the targeted and select group of Syrian and Iraqi refugees, and those entering Australia under the main humanitarian program. According to the UNHCR, there are almost 2.5 million registered refugees from Afghanistan (<https://www.unhcr.org/en-au/afghanistan.html>). We spoke with refugee families who arrived from approximately mid-2015 to the end of 2017, though most arrived in 2017.

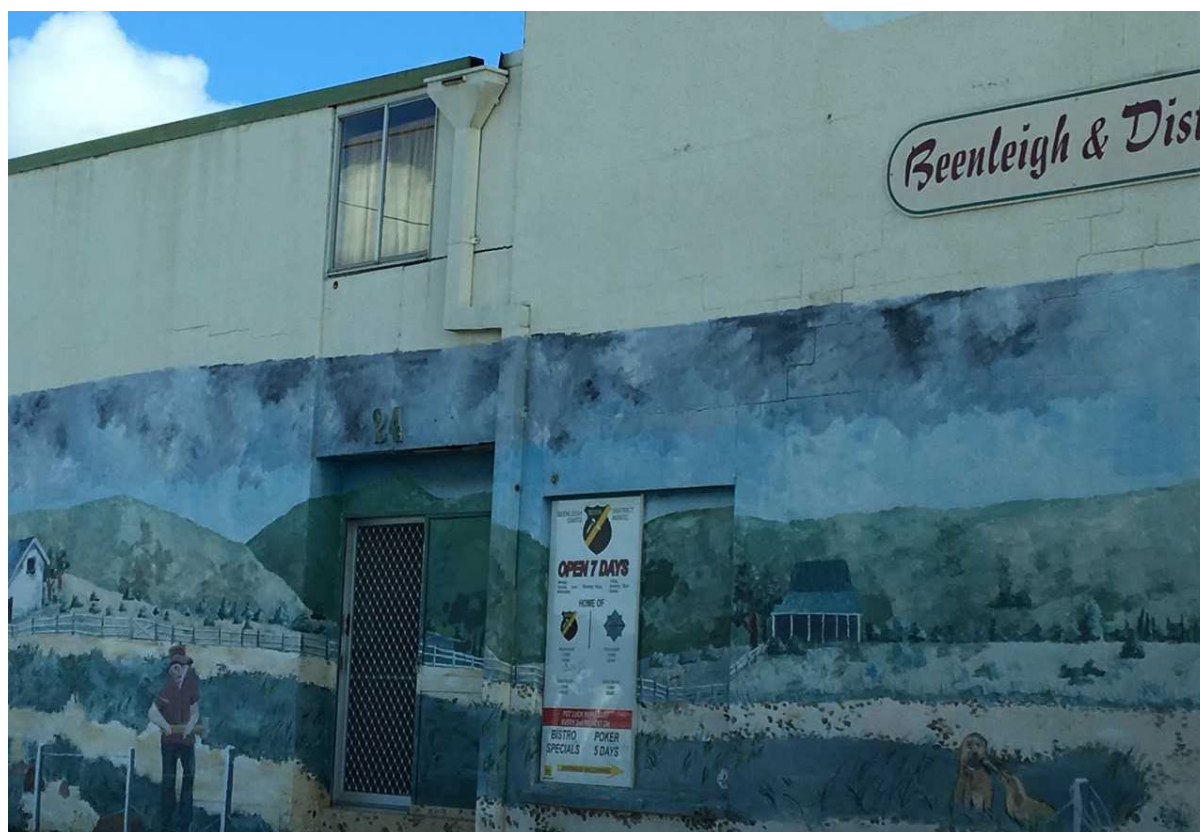
The focus of this first report – we will report on NSW and Victoria late in 2019 – is to explore the challenges and opportunities of settlement in Australia from the experiences of the Syrian, Iraqi and Afghan refugees themselves in Queensland. Ultimately, the aim of the three reports is not only to present evidence but also to spark a conversation about, and to contribute to an understanding of, the contribution that refugees make to Australian society and how we can enhance the social well-being, employability prospects, economic security and educational opportunities of recently arrived refugees in Australia. An evidence-based approach which draws on the lived experience of recent arrivals can also inform policy and services to enhance the settlement experience of this group.

The Research

The project employs a *mixed-method approach*, which includes face-to-face interviews, a survey and an analysis of primary and secondary source material. In addition to giving voice to refugee families, evidence building also includes insights from conversations with key stakeholders in the field, such as policymakers, Non-government organisation (NGO) representatives, employers and educators along with our national and international partners. Finally, the dominant popular discourse is also assessed with examinations of secondary source material appearing in the media.

The project is funded by an *Australian Research Council* (ARC)-Linkage Grant and industry partners in Australia including Access Community Services, AMES Australia, Multicultural Development Australia (MDA) and Settlement Services International (SSI) who provide valuable input in interviewee recruitment and research outputs. Challenging and/or affirming our approach to policy and practice on refugee settlement are our discussions and collaborations with these industry partners in Australia along with researchers in Canada, Finland, Germany, New Zealand, Sweden and the UK.

A key point of departure from the extant literature and policy documents is that the *family* is the social unit through which refugee settlement is experienced and negotiated and hence where settlement outcomes are investigated. In 2018, we interviewed **233 families**: that is, a total of **632 individuals**, across NSW, Queensland and Victoria, comprised of 118 Syrian, 82 Iraqi and 33 Afghan families (the latter is our control group). Children aged 5-18 years who were also willing participated in the research with their parent's consent.



Mural in Beenleigh, a suburb of Logan (Photo: Carol Reid)

Another key point of departure is that while most refugees settled in Sydney, Brisbane and Melbourne, *regional Australia* has become increasingly important as a destination for refugee arrivals. In order to evaluate the experience of newly-arrived refugee families in regional areas we interviewed refugee families in Logan and Toowoomba in Queensland, in Wollongong and Coffs Harbor in NSW, and in Shepparton in Victoria.

The purpose of this report is to present the findings from the Queensland interviews and surveys which included 75 families in total, 44 from Syria, 21 from Iraq and 10 from Afghanistan. Interview and survey data were collected across three locations, including Logan (Syria, n=17; and Iraq, n=8), Toowoomba (Syria, n=10; Iraq, n=7; and Afghanistan, n=10) and Brisbane (Syria, n=17; and Iraq, n=6). The informants were recruited through our Industry Partner networks.

Another key point of departure is that the research project is *longitudinal* in design. We visit the refugee families once a year for three years in order to better capture their changing settlement experiences and outcomes. Our survey questions – answered on iPad and linked to Qualtrics – were derived from some questions furnishing the BNLA (Building a New Life in Australia) longitudinal survey of newly-arrived refugees in Australia, conducted by the Department of Social Services since 2013. The first wave of data collection ran from October 2013 to March 2014, with following waves conducted in October to March each year subsequently. This allows us to compare and benchmark the outcomes for Syrian, Iraqi and Afghan refugees in 2018 with the BNLA results. It also permits us to measure the change in an individual's outcomes – say in terms of number of friends, English language ability, employment and education, and of course, challenges and opportunities during the settlement process – over the three years of the study.

In the next section, we highlight some of the key findings of the Queensland research with refugee families in their settlement process.

Key findings

Thankful to Australia

All the refugees we interviewed were very grateful for the opportunity provided by Australia to provide refuge for themselves and their families. They all want to repay that by contributing to Australia through their employment expertise, and young people, by contributing to the community, economy and labour market – and society.

On Arrival Programs and Services for Refugees

The overall finding is that policies and procedures that have been established to support humanitarian immigrant and refugee settlement in the first years of arrival – and the organisations that have successfully tendered to provide these services – are very successful. It is often said that Australia provides world's best practice for the reception of newly-arrived refugees. The evidence strongly supports this assertion in two ways. First, nearly every one of the 233 humanitarian immigrant families interviewed in 2018 were full of praise for the support that they received on-arrival, a time of great stress and uncertainty for them. These families could not speak more highly of the support that they received in these first three months. Second, in 2017 the number of refugees arriving in Australia effectively doubled the intake of previous decades – putting unprecedented stress on service providers. In light of these amplified pressures on service providers, these outcomes are even more remarkable.



Brisbane (Photo: Carol Reid)

Refugee Employment a Key Challenge

The evidence strongly attests that for refugees and humanitarian immigrants getting **access to the Australian labour market is perhaps the greatest settlement challenge** that they face. Of the three states sampled, Qld had the most successful refugee employment outcomes but only 28.6% of adult males and 6.8% of adult females reported that they were employed. Of the locations sampled within Qld, Brisbane had the highest employment (24.1%); this was a higher percentage than that found in the BNLA.

The Syrian-conflict intake selected mainly Christian refugees from Syria and Iraq with impressive education and employment histories and achievements. Many Syrians were professionals. Finding a job in Australia – particularly one where they can use their education, skills and experience – is the most obvious challenge. Most noted a desire to get their English language fluency up to speed first – a key feature in gaining access to the labour market and to social engagement more broadly. As noted by one respondent of English language competency: *This is the challenge of refugee economic inclusion in Queensland and other parts of Australia.*

The refugees we interviewed **hated not working and hated being on welfare benefits in Australia**. While grateful for the Centrelink payments, they do not want “sit down money”: they are anxious to start working as soon as possible to repay Australian society for providing safe refuge for them and their families.

English Language Training

English language competency was seen by refugees as their biggest hurdle in accessing employment: most were delaying entry into the labour market while their English-language ability was getting up to speed.

While there was a lot of praise for **English language classes** there was also considerable concern voiced by the adults interviewed in families, regarding overcrowding, and inflexibility in delivery including place, time of day and level of education related to language ability. Furthermore, there was a clash noted between participation in English language classes and seeking employment, which created significant frustrations for the refugee respondents. Again, the doubling of the intake has put considerable stress on resources.

Friendly Neighbours

Over 90 per cent of the refugee adults surveyed in Queensland reported that people in their neighbourhood were friendly compared to 87.3% of refugees in the national BNLA survey. Queensland refugees were just behind NSW refugees (92.3%) in this regard. Toowoomba had the strongest results, followed by Brisbane and Logan, though even in Logan 82.8% of refugees reported that people in their neighbourhood were friendly.

A Good Place to Bring up their Children

The overall motivation of most of our refugee informants to come to Australia was driven by the need to secure a better future for their children. Many of the adults conceded that while they themselves might have difficulties with language or employment **they were confident that their children would have a good life in Australia**: 84.2% of Queensland refugees thought that their neighbourhood is a good place to bring up their children. This was similar to the NSW result and only slightly behind the BNLA national result.

Good Schools for Refugee Children

Within Queensland, around eight out of ten refugee parents living in Brisbane and Toowoomba were **very happy with their local schools**, a very strong result. Logan respondents were not so convinced about the local schooling opportunities for their children with only about half (48.3%) of the refugee parents surveyed happy with their local schools.

Young Refugees are Impressive

The **young refugees** were overwhelmingly impressive in their English language skills given the short time they had been in Australia. They were optimistic about the future, in the main had a wide network of friends from various backgrounds and really enjoyed their schools. The great majority of young refugee informants in Queensland – 76.3% – thought that school was ‘excellent’ or ‘very good’, and a further 20.3% thought that it was satisfactory. Of course, the first six months had been difficult for them, missing friends, grandparents and the lifestyle, but they had adjusted with the help of community organisations and school teachers.

Queensland a Safe Place

Queensland is a safe place for refugees to settle. Within Qld, it is remarkable that all the refugees living in Toowoomba felt safe living there, as did nearly all of those living in Brisbane (96.3%). Logan was not considered as safe as other locations but even in Logan two in three respondents (65.5%) felt safe in the area.

Talking to the Neighbours

Another aspect of social inclusion and successful settlement relates to whether new refugee arrivals had social relations with— talked to – their neighbours.

Overall 43% of our Queensland refugee informants reported that it was easy to talk to their neighbours, a similar outcome to the national BNLA study (48.5%). Notably, the Queensland refugee respondents had lived next to their neighbours for less than a year while the majority of those surveyed in the BNLA had lived next to their neighbours for several years. In contrast to this trend, Logan respondents noted the most difficulty talking to their new neighbours, with only one in four (25.9%) refugee informants reporting that it was easy to talk to their neighbours.



Laneway in Toowoomba (Photo: Carol Reid)

Understanding Australian Culture

Like any country, Australia has its cultural idiosyncrasies that newcomers find different and sometimes difficult to understand and to adjust to. This is often seen in colloquial language and expressions as well as other cultural mores. In the national BNLA, six out of ten refugees (59.4%) found it easy to understand Australian ways and culture. **The newly-arrived refugees in Queensland did much better – 68.5% found it easy to understand Australian ways and culture – in a much shorter period of settlement.** Toowoomba was the area where respondents had the most success understanding Australian ways and culture with 83% finding it easy to understand Australian ways and culture.

Most Refugees Happy in Queensland

A personal aspect of successful refugee settlement relates to the level of happiness of the individual refugees. **Two in three refugees in Queensland are happy living there:** 38.2% of refugee informants in Queensland reported that they were “very happy” and another 22.4% mostly happy. This is a remarkable outcome given the trauma that these families had experienced and of course the recent timing of their arrival and settlement.

Queensland Not Racist to Newly-Arrived Refugees

We asked our refugee informants about experiences of racism in Australia. Perhaps surprisingly – given the dog whistle politics about refugees that has dominated political and public discourses in Australia for two decades at least – **most said that they had not experienced racism in Queensland.** A few informants recounted an incident in public that they felt was racist.

All Refugees Await Australian Citizenship

Most of the refugees felt happy with their lives in Australia and were positive about their future. All of those interviewed stated that they wanted to take up Australian citizenship as soon as possible.

The biggest worry that refugees in Queensland faced was that of family reunion. Most of the refugees still had family in their home country who they contacted regularly – often daily, using a range of social media and apps. Their key priority is to get these family members out to Australia, but most find that it has not been possible to do so.



Background



1. Background

In 2015, the Australian Government announced the resettlement of 12,000 Syrian and Iraqi refugees – two groups were identified and targeted as those most in need as a consequence of the Syrian conflict – in addition to the existing annual Humanitarian Program intake. At the same time the Government announced that the intake under the Humanitarian (refugee) Program would increase from 13,750 in 2015-2016 and 2016-2017, to 16,250 in 2017-2018, and 18,750 in 2018-2019 (DSS 2019). For the purposes of our study we have conducted interviews and surveys with Syrian conflict refugees from Syria and Iraq, and refugees from Afghanistan as our control group: the latter provides an evaluation of the convergence and divergence between the services provided and settlement outcomes of the targeted and select group of Syrian and Iraqi refugees, and those entering Australia under the main humanitarian program. Our focus of investigation is refugee families who arrived from approximately mid-2015 to the end of 2017, though most refugee families in our study arrived in Queensland in 2017.

While the legitimate fear of persecution binds refugees in their need to seek resettlement elsewhere, they are a heterogeneous group including men, women and children of different ages and health status, from different ethnic, religious and cultural backgrounds, from different socio-economic backgrounds, with a broad spectrum of skills and qualifications and life experiences. They are also different by nature of the social networks to which they have access in their country of resettlement; their broader diasporic networks; and their pathways of entry (selected, as was the case of the Syrian-conflict refugees and those arriving under the standing humanitarian pathway; or as asylum seekers, as was the case with Afghan refugees).



Context



2. Context

In the last few years the world has witnessed unprecedented flows of displaced people. According to the UNHCR (2018) 'we are now witnessing the highest levels of displacement on record. An unprecedented 65.3 million people around the world have been forced from home. Among them are nearly 21.3 million refugees, over half of whom are under the age of 18'. The UNHCR estimates that nearly 34,000 people are forcibly displaced every day as a result of conflict or persecution. During the second half of 2015, more than 1 million people arrived in Europe by sea, a more than fourfold increase compared to the previous year's 216,000 arrivals (Kingsley 2016). About half of the people originated from the Syrian Arab Republic, but those from Afghanistan and Iraq also accounted for a significant proportion (UNHCR 2016: 7). As the OECD recently reported, 'warfare and instability in the Middle East and Africa, with countries in the Mediterranean area under particular pressure' has put humanitarian immigration flows at the top of the global immigration agenda and 'is also causing countries to review the ways in which their humanitarian programmes and procedures are working' (OECD 2015: 49).

Humanitarian entrants have greater problems with settlement compared to other categories of Australia's immigrant intake. They also experience greater socio-economic disadvantage in Australia than do other immigrants (Hugo 2011). Fozdar and Hartley (2013) point to the problems that refugees face in the areas of housing, employment and health as well as with social connections in Australia. Humanitarian immigrants in particular experience more problems in the labour market than other immigrants. In 2006 the unemployment rate for those born in Somalia was 30.7 per cent and Sudan 28.2 per cent at a time when the average Australian unemployment rate was below 6 per cent (Collins 2011). When they do get jobs, humanitarian immigrants face what Hugo (2011: 109) calls 'occupational skidding', that is, they do not get jobs commensurate with their qualifications and generally end up working in low-skill and low-paid occupations irrespective of their human capital (Colic-Piesker and Tilbury 2007). Thus, some humanitarian arrivals are trapped in low income jobs in secondary labour market niches or remain economically excluded as part of a social underclass. As Hugo (2011: xxiv) concludes, "Much remains to be done to assist humanitarian settlers to enter the Australian labour market and to facilitate their upward mobility".

The evidence strongly attests that for refugees and humanitarian immigrants, getting access to the Australian labour market is perhaps the greatest settlement challenge that they face. Data published by the Productivity Commission (2016: 476) shows that the unemployment rate for migrants who arrived as part of the humanitarian intake (37.7%) was more than three times that of migrants who arrived as part of the skilled intake (11.6%) and nearly double that of migrants who arrived as part of the family intake (21.0%).

While the focus in the literature largely remains on employment, welfare, health and housing, little if any research has focused on the family unit and a cross generational understanding of the experience of settlement in the Australian context. This report and the subsequent state reports to follow, aim to address this gap.



Methodology



3. Methodology

A multi method approach has been employed to collect and analyse data: including a survey (requiring a quantitative analysis), semi-structured interviews with refugees and key stakeholders in the field, and documentary analysis. This report presents a synopsis of the survey and interview findings with regard to refugee families.

Our multi method approach represents a unique contribution to the study of refugees. In addition to employing a survey tool that mirrors some questions furnishing the BNLA longitudinal survey (Building a New Life in Australia survey), we complemented this evidence with a large-scale interview process involving 233 refugee families in three states in metropolitan and semi-rural areas. We have also conducted interviews with key stakeholders in the field and extensive document analyses. This triangulated approach to evidence building separates our study from the extant literature which typically focuses on either qualitative or quantitative data collection, and on refugees or stakeholders as the main subject of analysis (see for instance, Auer, 2017; Delaporte and Piracha, 2018; Elliott and Yusuf, 2014; Phillmore, 2011; Stave and Hillesund, 2015). The scale of our study is also unique, displaying exhaustive evidence-based insights into the lived experience of refugee settlement coupled with insights from the perspective of policy makers and practitioners into the delivery of services surrounding the settlement of refugees.

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), who 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 who 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 of participants. Interviews were scheduled at a time of convenience to the family. With the exception of interviewees in Victoria, the majority of the interviews were undertaken at the homes of the refugee families, with only a minor cohort opting to be interviewed at the Migrant Resource Centre (3 in Queensland). All family interviews took between one and two hours. Accompanying each Chief Investigator to all interviews was a Bilingual Research Assistant (BRA).



Community information session, Brisbane, with research project Chief Investigators Jock Collins, Carol Reid and Dimitria Groutsis, February 2018.

All BRAs were refugees sourced through the 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.

Overall, qualitative research allows the researcher to capture the lived experience of the participant in their own words (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Savin-Baden & Howell Major, 2013). Accordingly, a semi-structured interview was deemed to be the best way in which to collect in-depth details of the experiences of refugees (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Perry, 1998) and of the stakeholders.

For the refugees the semi-structured interview approach offered participants the ability to present and elaborate on their pre-migration and post migration experience. Similarly, for the stakeholders, the semi-structured approach allowed them to direct the discussion of the challenges and opportunities in policy making and delivery of services.

The discussion was framed by open-ended questions in order to elicit the experience of the informants and to gain insights into how they make sense of their reality. The semi-structured interview schedules for adults and children can be found in Appendix A. Our semi-structured interview process involved the use of prompts as a means by which deeper information could be garnered in some of the interviews, while for others prompts were unnecessary as the participants themselves guided the discussion (Rabionet, 2011).

While incredibly useful in providing deep insights, the qualitative approach is not without limitations. For instance, while our sample size is significant, we present our findings with an element of caution given the heterogeneity of the refugee experience. This is particularly the case for our control group – refugees from Afghanistan, who comprise a numerically smaller group of informants. The second limitation was the reliance of the CIs on the assistance of the BRAs during the interview process. While all the BRAs did an excellent job in translating for the project there were instances when we felt that elements of the discussion were lost. We also noticed a variation between the quality of the BRAs, which for us indicates there may be some variation in the information provided. Having said that we could not have elicited the breadth and depth of information gained about the lived experience of Syrian, Iraqi and Afghan refugees without their assistance. We have used this experience to provide another training round prior to year-two interviews.

The empirical contribution of this research for the Queensland segment of the project consisted of in depth semi-structured interviews with 75 families in total: 44 from Syria, 21 from Iraq and 10 from Afghanistan. Interview and survey data were collected from across three locations, including Logan (Syria, n=17; and Iraq, n=8), Toowoomba (Syria, n=10; Iraq, n=7; and Afghanistan, n=10) and Brisbane (Syria, n=17; and Iraq, n=6).

The interviews were all recorded and transcribed before coding was employed, using NVivo and our *apriori* categories of analysis based on the topics covered in the interviews. The analysis of the interviews revealed several themes emerging from our discussions around the pre and post migration experience.

Similarly, for the stakeholder interviews – which involved representatives from NGOs; employer bodies, TAFEs, schools and other educators – information was recorded and transcribed before coding was employed using NVivo. The interview findings with regard to these stakeholders will be presented in future reports.

In addition to the qualitative analysis we also collected and analysed survey data from family members. All family interview participants were surveyed drawing on an instrument that reflected many of the questions used in the BNLA. Questions were deliberately framed to mirror the BNLA so as to allow for a comparison of quantitative data over the three year period with the pre-existing longitudinal survey instrument. Adults were asked a total of 25 questions and young people were asked a total of 8 questions. The survey was completed in the relevant community language or in English where relevant. The survey was administered largely by the BRA or by the individuals themselves. It was completed on an iPad using Qualtrics.

Survey collection and analysis

The adult survey data can be categorized into three broad areas: (1) 'demographic': characteristics of the respondent (age, gender, location, ethnolinguistic characteristics etc.), (2) 'integration': relationships within the local community/English language acquisition, (3) employment.

For most of the integration and employment data the effects analysed were for: age, gender, emigration country, location, and state. Other effects analysed included marital status, religion, language and ethnicity.

The young people survey data also focused on demographic characteristics and explored relationships with the local community, engagement with school, English language acquisition and their sense of belonging. Effects analysed for young people included age, gender, location and ethnicity.

The survey results were quantitatively analysed using non-parametric, descriptive measures of frequencies of varying responses to questions. Only population parameters (i.e. not statistical samples) were analysed. Measures of central tendency and dispersion were not employed in the analysis. While most questions required Boolean (yes/no, Male/Female) or ordinal responses (e.g. Likert scales), questions concerning ethnolinguistic characteristics (ethno-religion, language etc.) required an open-ended text response. The survey questions for adults and children can be found in Appendix B.

Blank or invalid responses to individual questions are included in the total number of responses for any given question but they are treated as outliers. That is, they are noted on chart headings as either 'null' or 'not specified', but are not included in the body of the chart. Where frequencies of responses are expressed as a percentage they are calculated with regard to the total number of responses for any particular question, which is indicated by (n = x).

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 (BNLA, 2017) and pertains to Wave 3 data, which was collected in 2015.



Refugee Informants In Queensland



4. Refugee Informants in Queensland

The refugee informants were recruited using a networking methodology that drew on the refugee families' links to our Industry Partners in Queensland, MDA (Brisbane and Toowoomba) and Access (Logan). As explained previously we sought recently-arrived refugee families from Syria and Iran who were part of the special one-off intake of 12,000 Syrian Conflict refugees, plus refugee families from Afghanistan who arrived at the same time but as part of the annual humanitarian (refugee) intake, in order to compare the similarities and differences in background and settlement experience in Queensland. We chose Toowoomba as the site for interviewing refugee families from Afghanistan. Similarly, the research is interested in the experiences of refugee families who settle in metropolitan areas – in this case Brisbane – as well as those who settle in regional areas (in this case Logan and Toowoomba). In this section of the report we outline the characteristics of our refugee informants in Queensland.

Table 4.1: Number of families interviewed, by Service Provider location

State	Metropolitan or Regional	Location	Number of families interviewed			Total
			Syrian	Iraqi	Afghan	
NSW	Sydney Metropolitan	Pilots (Bankstown)	2			2
		Auburn			19	19
		Fairfield	17	27		44
		Liverpool	3	22		25
		Parramatta	19	1		20
	Regional	Coffs Harbour	6	3	4	13
		Wollongong	7	3		10
QLD	Metropolitan	Brisbane	17	6		23
	Regional	Logan	17	8		25
		Toowoomba	10	7	10	27
VIC	Metropolitan	Melbourne	18	5		23
	Regional	Shepparton	2			2
Total			118	82	33	233

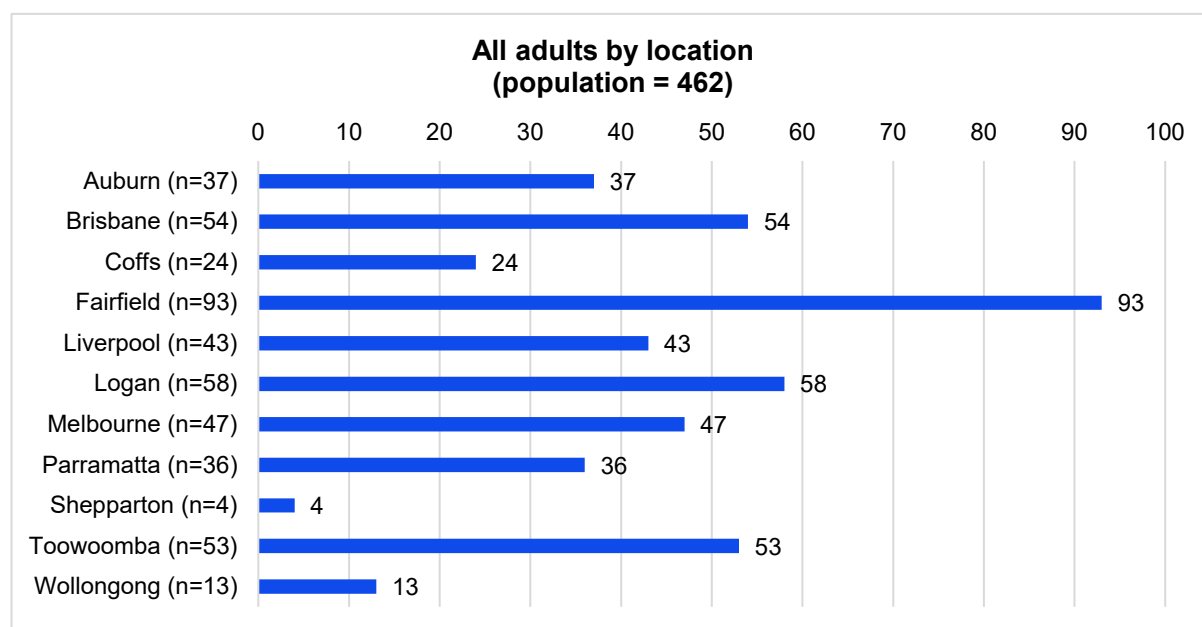
In the first year of the research (2018), we interviewed 233 families in all states: that is, a total of 632 individuals, across NSW, Queensland and Victoria (see Tables 4.1, 4.2). These comprised 118 Syrian, 82 Iraqi and 33 Afghan families (our control group). In Queensland, 75 families in total, 44 from Syria, 21 from Iraq and 10 from Afghanistan were interviewed. Interview and survey data were collected across three locations, including Logan (Syria, n=17; and Iraq, n=8), Toowoomba (Syria, n=10; Iraq, n=7; and Afghanistan, n=10) and Brisbane (Syria, n=17; and Iraq, n=6).

Table 4.2: Number of refugees surveyed, by gender and state

State	Adults		Young People		Total*
	Male	Female	Male	Female	
NSW	110	136	42	42	330
Qld	77	88	32	27	224
VIC	26	25	15	10	76
Total	213	249	89	79	630

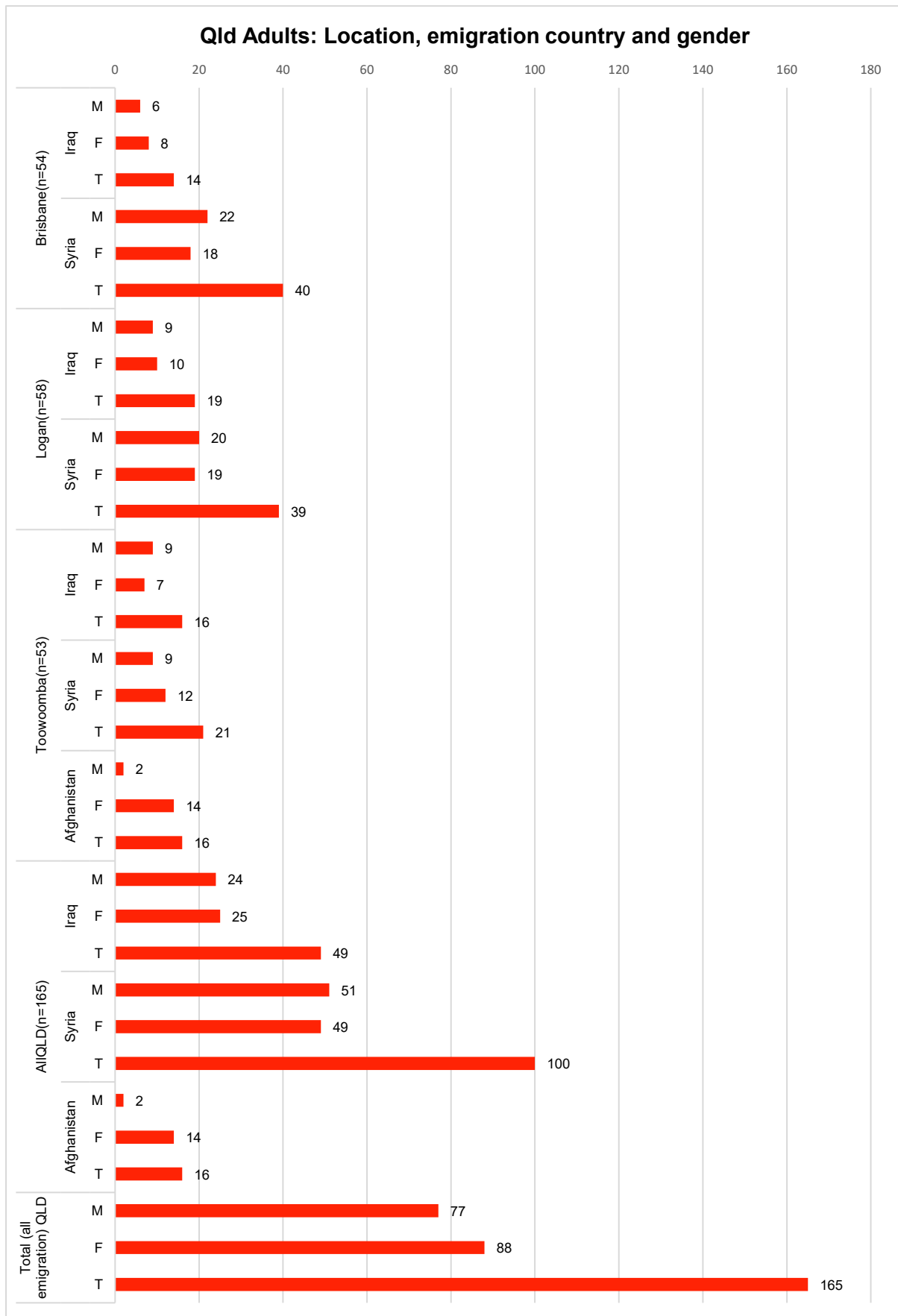
* The gender of two young people interviewed in Victoria was not recorded; they bring the total to 632.

Of the locations, the largest number of adult informants were drawn from Fairfield, in NSW, followed by Logan, Brisbane and Toowoomba in Qld (see Figure 4.1).

Figure 4.1: Number of adult refugees surveyed, by Service Provider location

Syrians made up the largest group in all locations (see Figure 4.2).

Figure 4.2: Number of adult refugees surveyed, by location, emigration country and gender



Most of the refugee families who we interviewed in Queensland had arrived on a 200 visa or a 204 (women at risk) visa. This is in contrast to the refugee families who we interviewed in NSW and Victoria who had arrived on a 202 family sponsorship refugee visa (see Table 4.3). This is an important point of difference for understanding the settlement outcomes of refugee families in Queensland: most arrived without any family in Australia unlike those in NSW and Victoria who had family members living in Australia (referred to as 'proposers') who sponsored their refugee visa application. If anything, we could assume that that made the task of settlement in Queensland more difficult for recently arrived refugees.

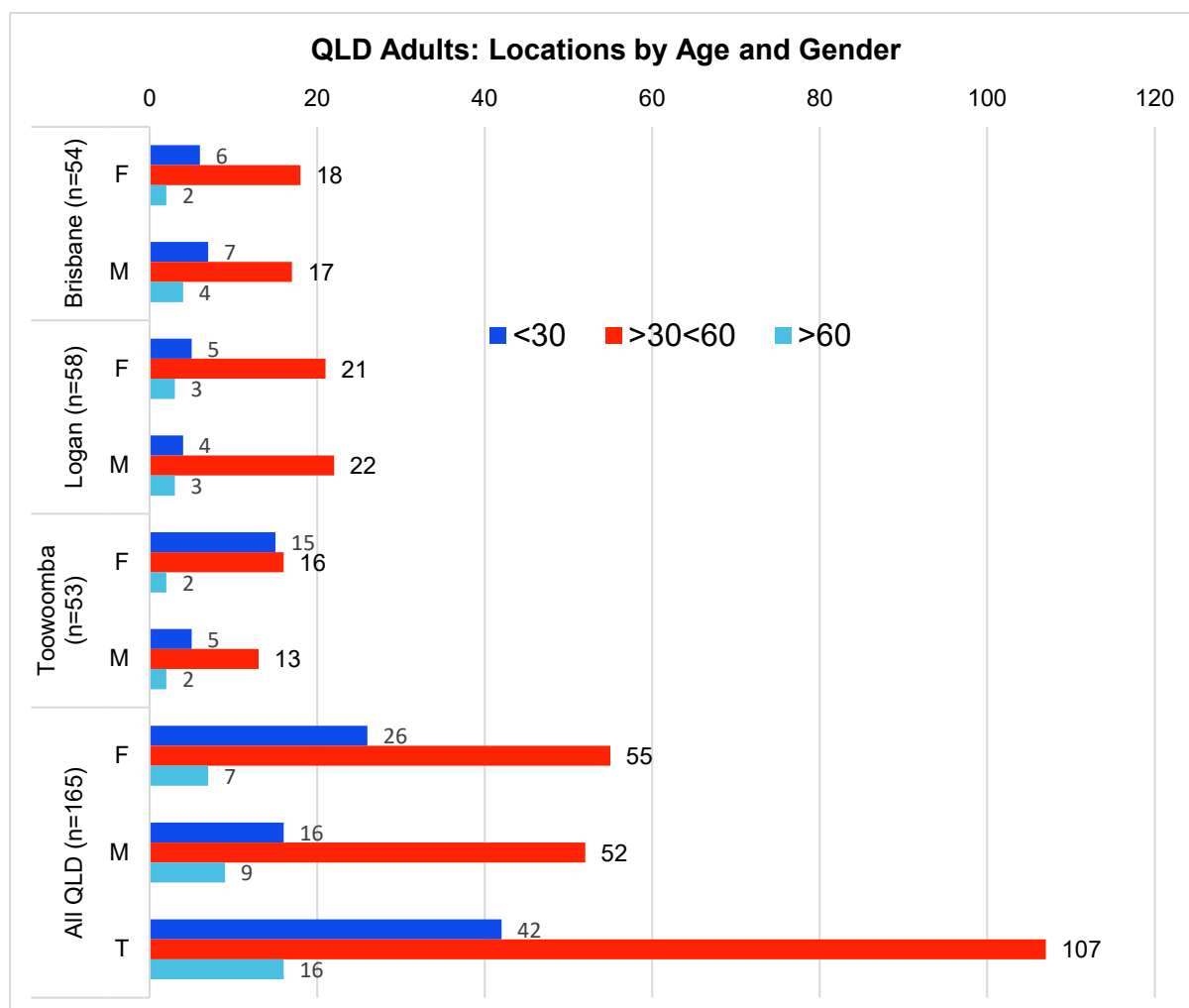
Table 4.3: Visa subclass (202 and 204) entrants to subdivisions of NSW, Qld, and VIC, arriving between 1 July 2015 and 31 December 2017

Country of Birth (Settlement)	NSW (4 subdivisions of Western Sydney)		Queensland (3 subdivisions of Brisbane)		Victoria (3 subdivisions of Melbourne)		Total
	Visa subclass 202	Visa subclass 204	Visa subclass 202	Visa subclass 204	Visa subclass 202	Visa subclass 204	
Afghanistan	65	28	33	20	41	68	255
Iraq	5,038	207	30	0	1,604	28	6,907
Syria	4,583	136	48	8	1,775	42	6,592
TOTAL (Iraq + Syria)	9,621	343	78	8	3,379	70	13,499

Source: Settlement Reporting Facility (SRF). Note that only the settler's latest known residential (or intended residential) address is recorded. Some settlers have no address details recorded. This table was obtained from reports generated between 18 and 22 January 2018 through the Settlement Reporting Facility.

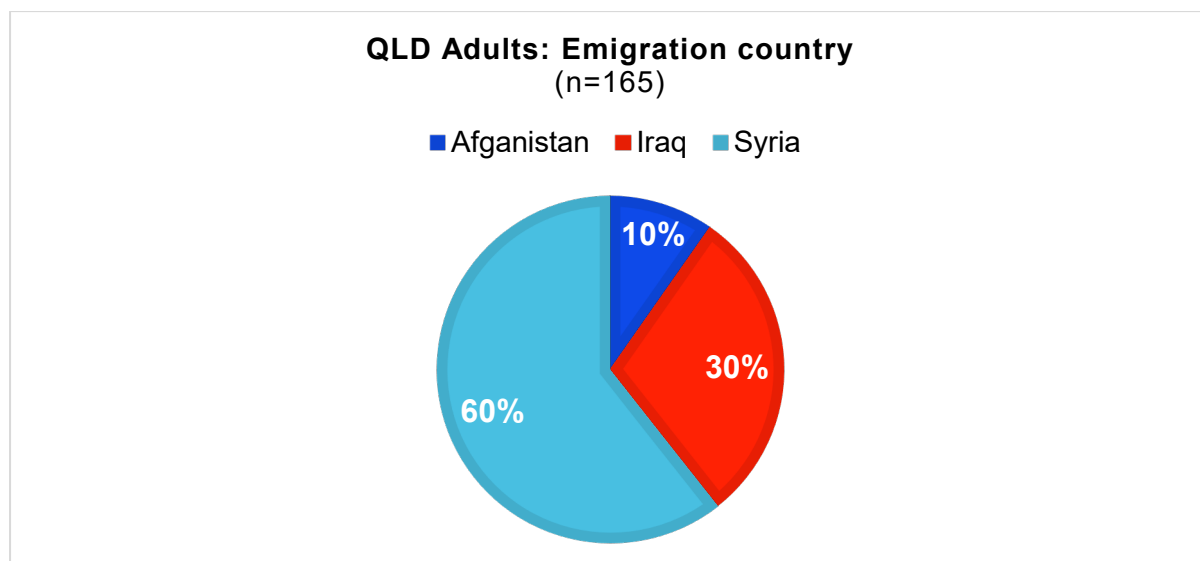
The large majority of respondents in Qld were in the 30 to 60 age bracket (see Figure 4.3). Females out-numbered males generally, apart from in Logan. This gender imbalance reflects the reality of the displacement experience of refugee families from places like Syria, Iran and Afghanistan where many families lost family members (often males) in bombings and attacks. It also reflects the high number of 204 visa families – with a female sole parent – from Afghanistan who were interviewed in Toowoomba.

Figure 4.3: Number of adults in Qld, by age and gender



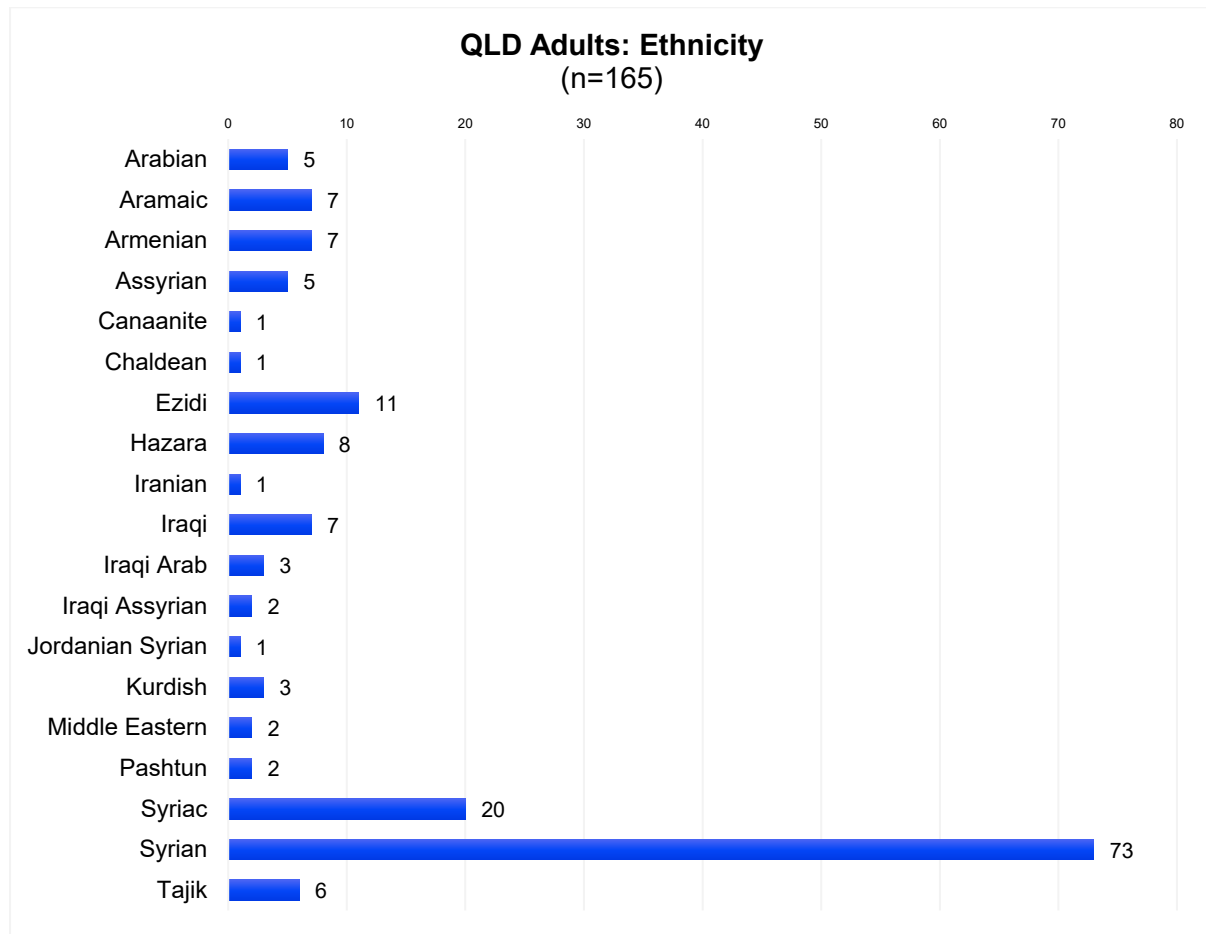
The bulk of adult refugees interviewed were from Syria (100 individuals out of 165, or 60%), while 49 adults from Iraq and 16 adults from Afghanistan were interviewed (see Figure 4.4).

Figure 4.4: Emigration country of Qld adults



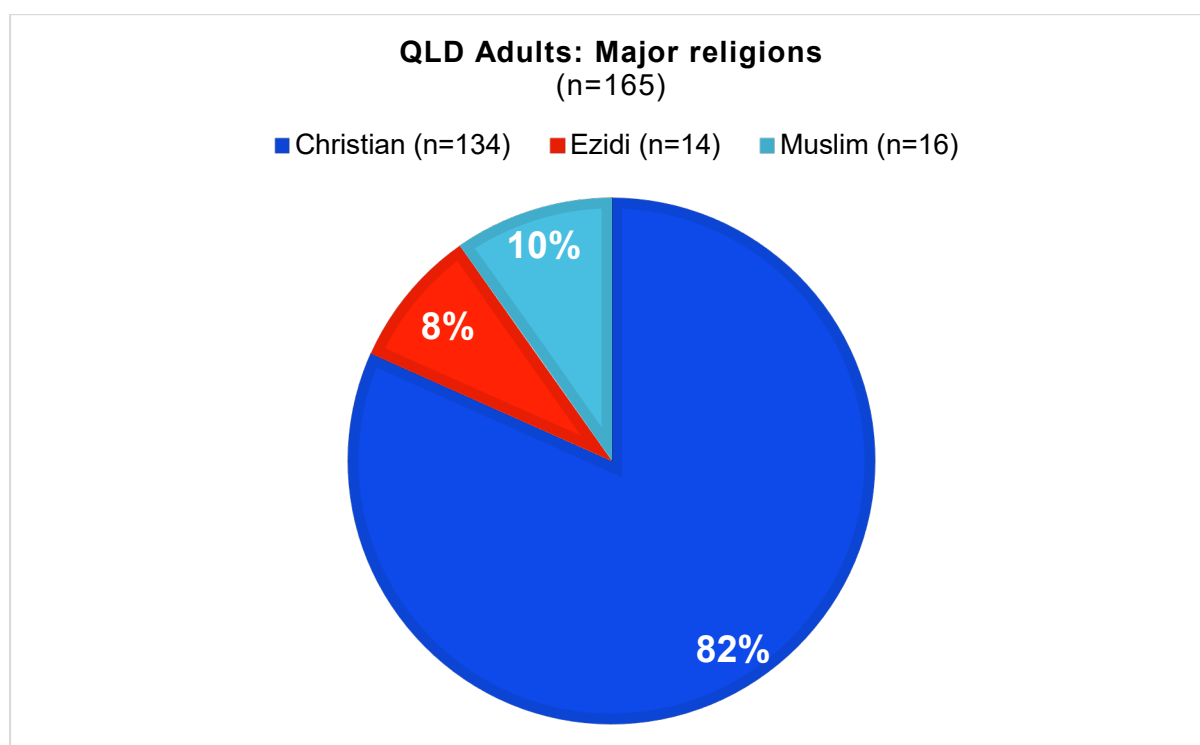
The recently-arrived refugee families from Syria and Iraq in particular were not homogenous, but reflected a diversity of religious, ethnic and linguistic backgrounds. Half of the refugee families from Afghanistan were Hazara, who were persecuted by the Taliban (Maley, 2016). A large number of Qld adult refugees identified as having Syrian ethnicity (73 out of 165) (see Figure 4.5). But Figure 4.5 also indicates that we interviewed 11 Ezidi adults in Toowoomba. The Ezidi (sometimes spelt Yazidi) experienced very violent oppression at the hands of ISIS, with many women – young and old – taken as sex slaves (Murad, 2018).

Figure 4.5: Ethnicity of Qld adults



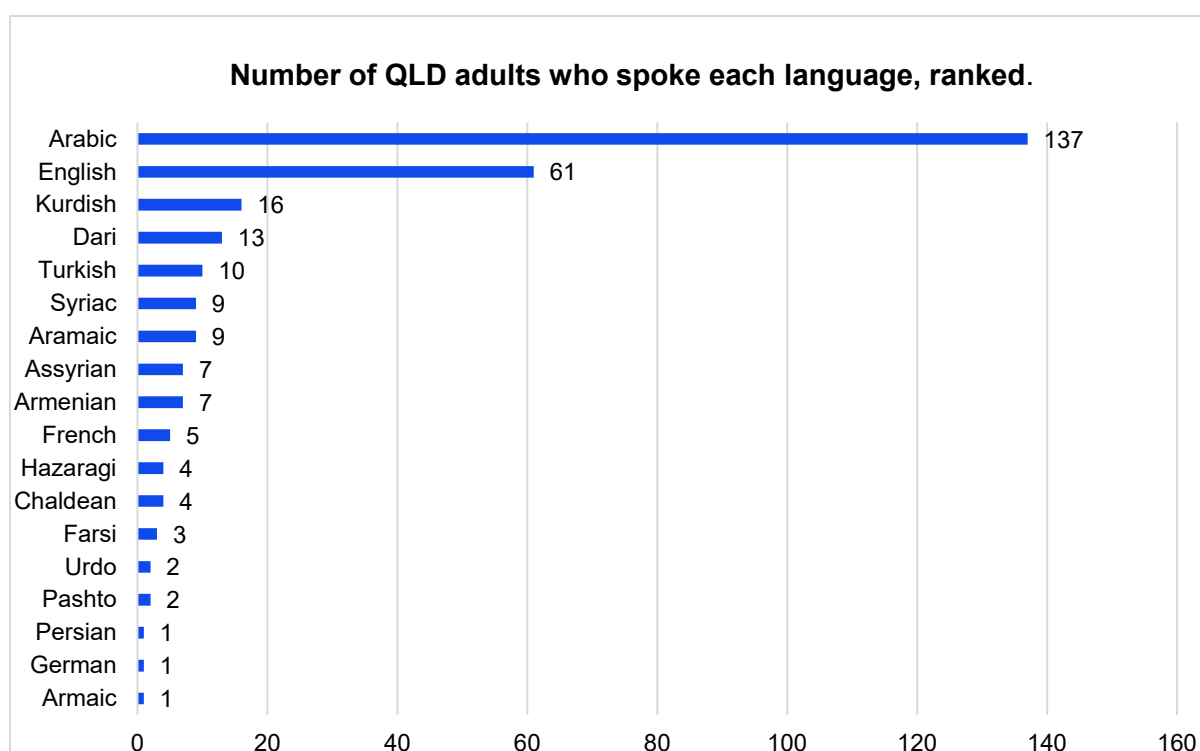
It is not surprising that most of the refugee informants – other than those from Afghanistan – were Christians. As Figure 4.6 shows, 83% of the Qld adult informants were Christian, with 10% Muslim and 8% Ezidi. This reflects the (perhaps curious) decision by the Australian government to include mostly Christians in the special Syrian-conflict refugee intake: curious since most refugees from the conflicts in Syria and Iraq were Muslim. This does not deny that they too have suffered greatly in the conflict.

Figure 4.6: The major religious groups of Qld adults



One key feature of the refugee informants was their linguistic diversity. The languages spoken by the adults were ranked by proportionate significance (see Figure 4.7). Arabic and English were widely spoken by those from Syria and Iraq while most from Afghanistan spoke Dari. Many of the Qld adult refugees spoke multiple languages.

Figure 4.7: The languages spoken by Qld adults





Pre-Migration Stories



5. Pre-Migration Stories

We know that all our refugee informants had horrific experiences in their homeland prior to fleeing for their safety. It was not our intention to dwell on these experiences because we did not want to resurrect trauma. Rather we asked our informants (see Table 5.1) about their pre-migration experience before the conflict, war, or persecution that led to their displacement. Without exception, all of those living in Syria and most of those living in Iraq had very fond memories of their life. Most had good jobs or professions; most had good homes and lifestyles. They spoke glowingly of their social life, of visiting family and friends for coffee and discussions late at night, with days not ending much before the early hours of the morning. It was a lifestyle they miss very much in Australia, where they find their neighbours tied to their houses after work and their neighbourhoods very quiet after 6 or 7 p.m.

Table 5.1: Gender, emigration country and location of adults who talked about their lives before migration

Number of Adults		
Gender	Male	67
	Female	75
Emigration Country	Syria	89
	Iraq	38
	Afghanistan	15
Location of Adults	Brisbane	55
	Logan	42
	Toowoomba	45
Total		142

Our interest was particularly in their education and work experiences prior to their displacement. As Table 5.2 shows, educational achievement varies considerably. Remarkably, 43 per cent of our refugee informants in Queensland – more females than males (Figure 5.1) – had a tertiary education background. Many of these are Syrian professionals with engineering, business, medical and education backgrounds (see Figure 5.3). At the other end of the spectrum, 14 informants had only primary education and 12 had no education at all. Many of the latter were from Afghanistan (Figure 5.2), where the Taliban refused Hazaras access to education. Clearly learning English when you are illiterate or have little education in your own language is immensely difficult.

Table 5.2: Level of education attained by adults

Education level attained	Number of adults
Tertiary	54
Secondary	45
Primary	14
No education	12
Total	125

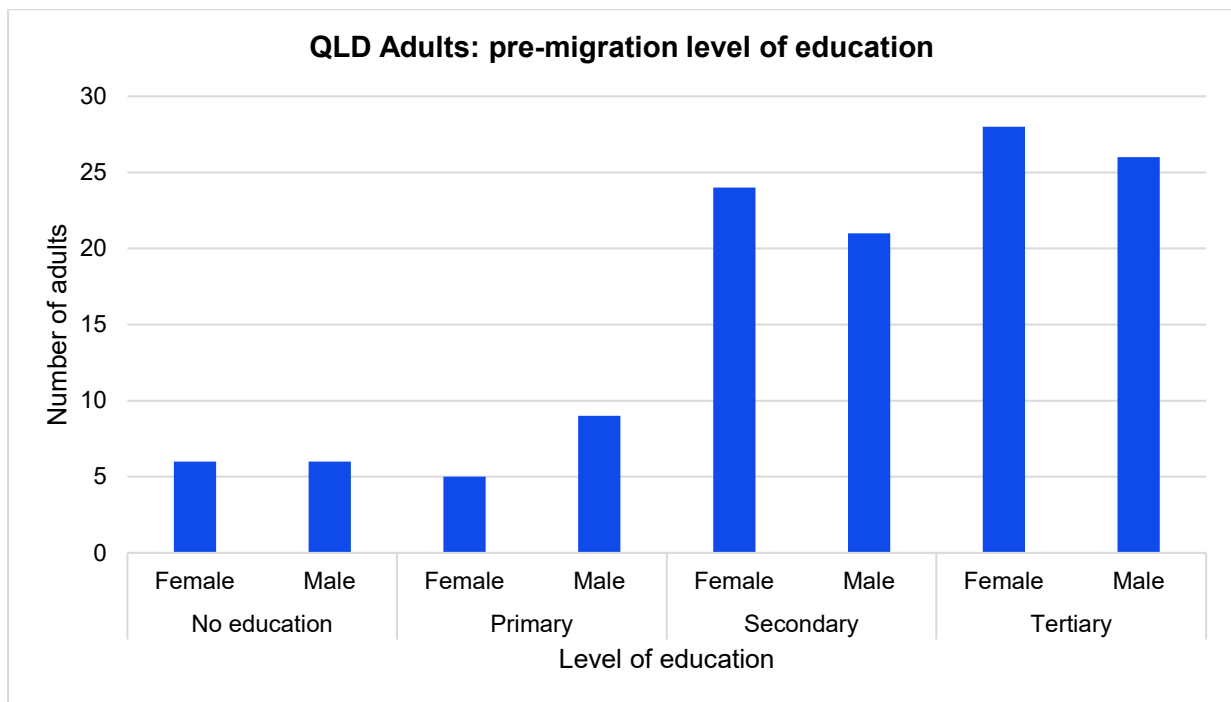
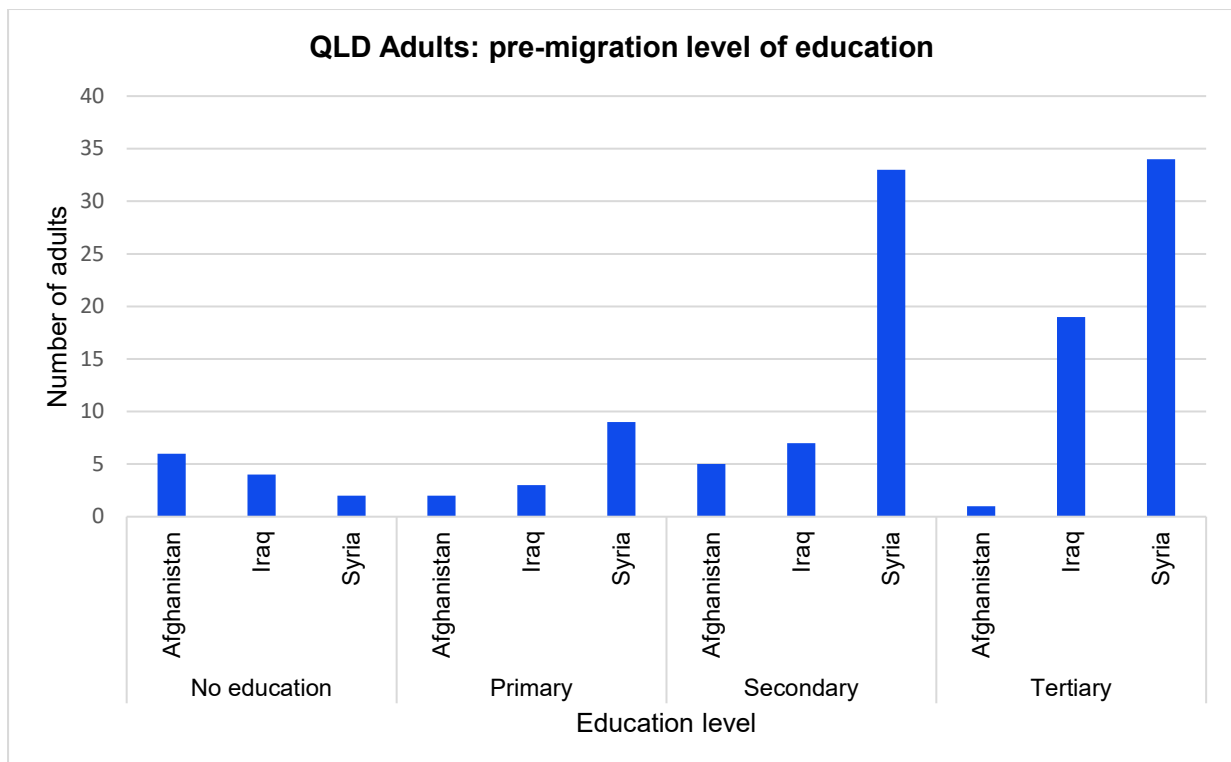
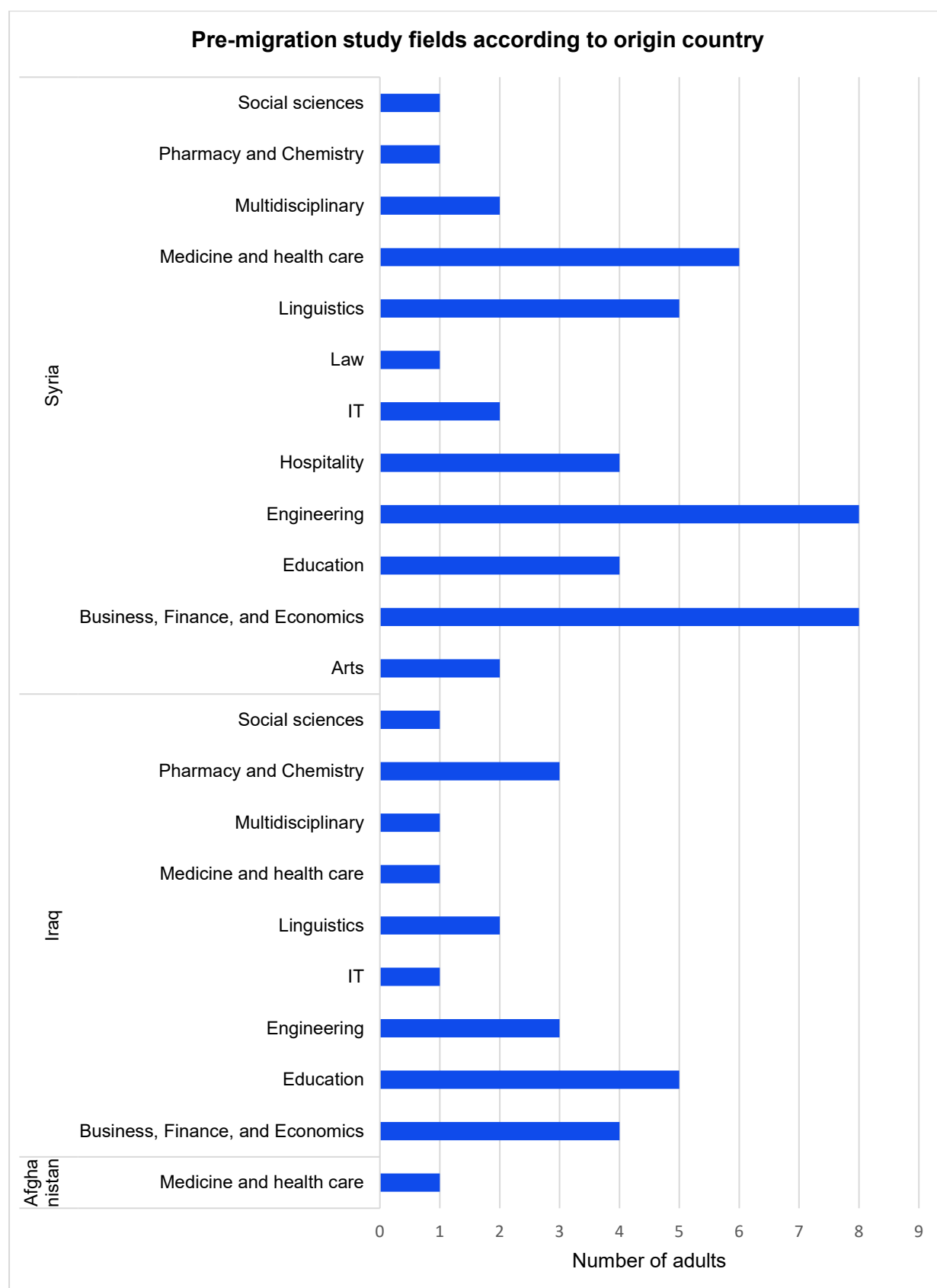
Figure 5.1: Pre-migration education level of Qld adults, by gender**Figure 5.2: Pre-migration education level of Qld adults, by emigration country**

Figure 5.3: Pre-migration study fields of Qld adults, by emigration country



Of the Queensland refugee adults surveyed, 97 had worked in their home country prior to coming to Australia. Of these, 76 were employed by others while 25 had run their own business (that is, were self-employed). 23 did not work – often the mothers of families – while 12 were studying (see Table 5.3).

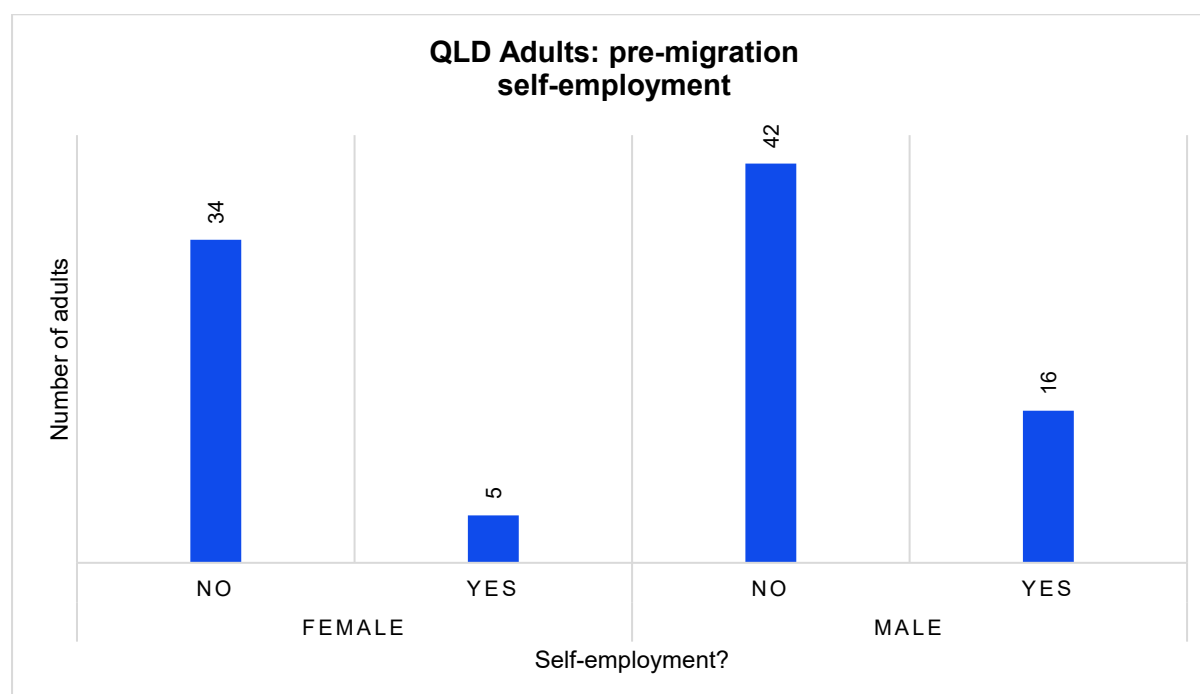
Table 5.3: Qld adults' previous employment experience

Previous employment experience*	Number of adults
Yes, I worked	97
I worked for an employer	76
I was self-employed	21
No, I did not work	23
I was studying	12

* Respondents could answer 'yes' to more than one category

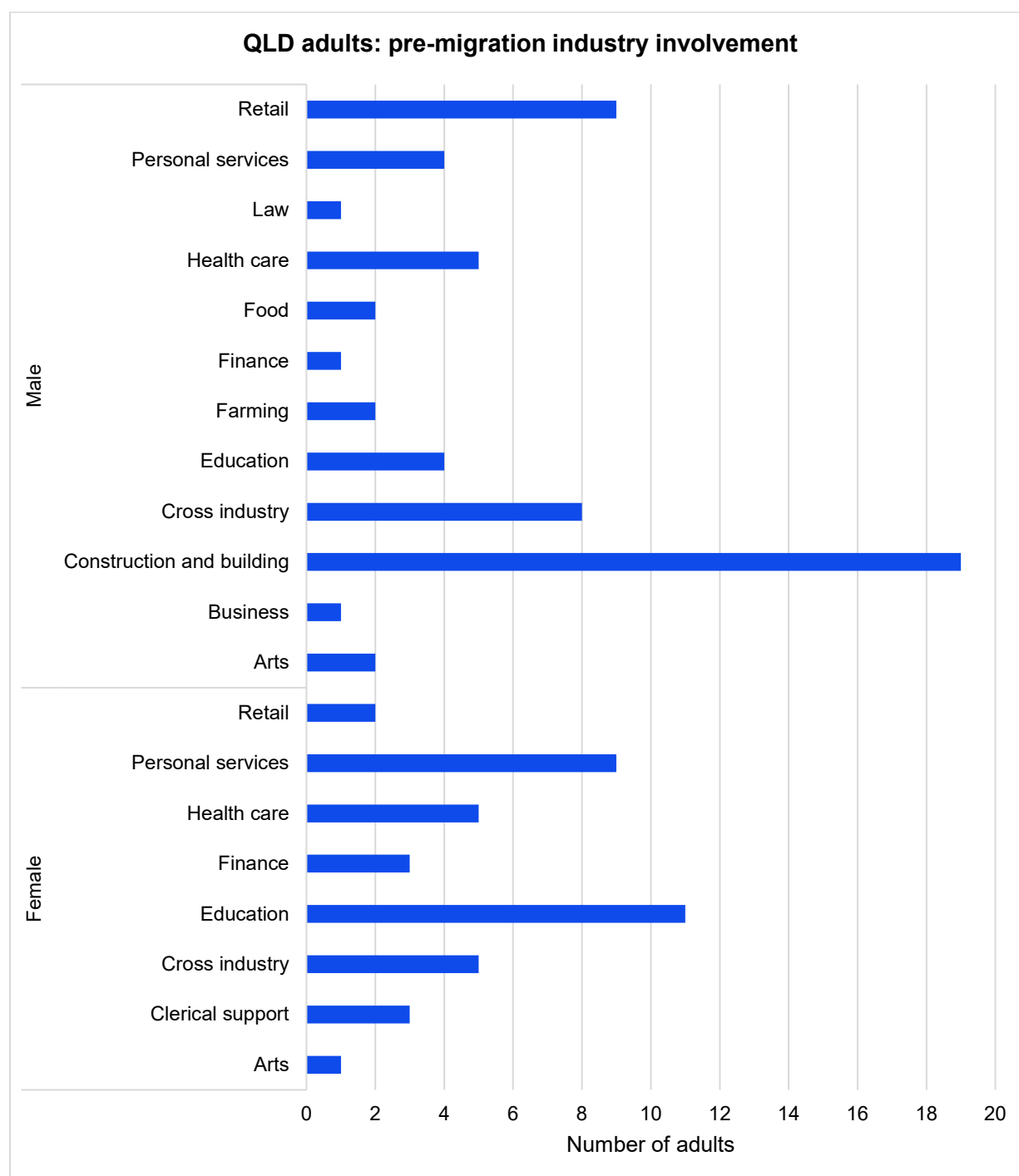
The self-employment data is interesting because for many refugees, establishing a business in Australia is a way of creating their own job and providing for their family (Collins, 2017b). As Figure 5.4 shows, while it was mainly male refugees who had had a prior business career, refugee women also had prior entrepreneurial experience and were interested in setting up a business in Australia.

Figure 5.4: Qld adults' previous experience with self employment, by gender



Finally, as Figure 5.5 shows, the refugees from Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan had employment experience across a wide range of industries. They want to thank Australia for giving haven to their families, by making a contribution to Australian society through their work. It is a cruel irony that many face very large barriers to getting a job in Australia. This is a market failure: they have great human capital potential, but we don't unlock it. It also constrains their settlement outcomes in Australia. Innovative solutions are required to address this problem.

Figure 5.5: Qld adults' pre-migration industry involvement, by gender





Coming to Australia



6. Coming to Australia

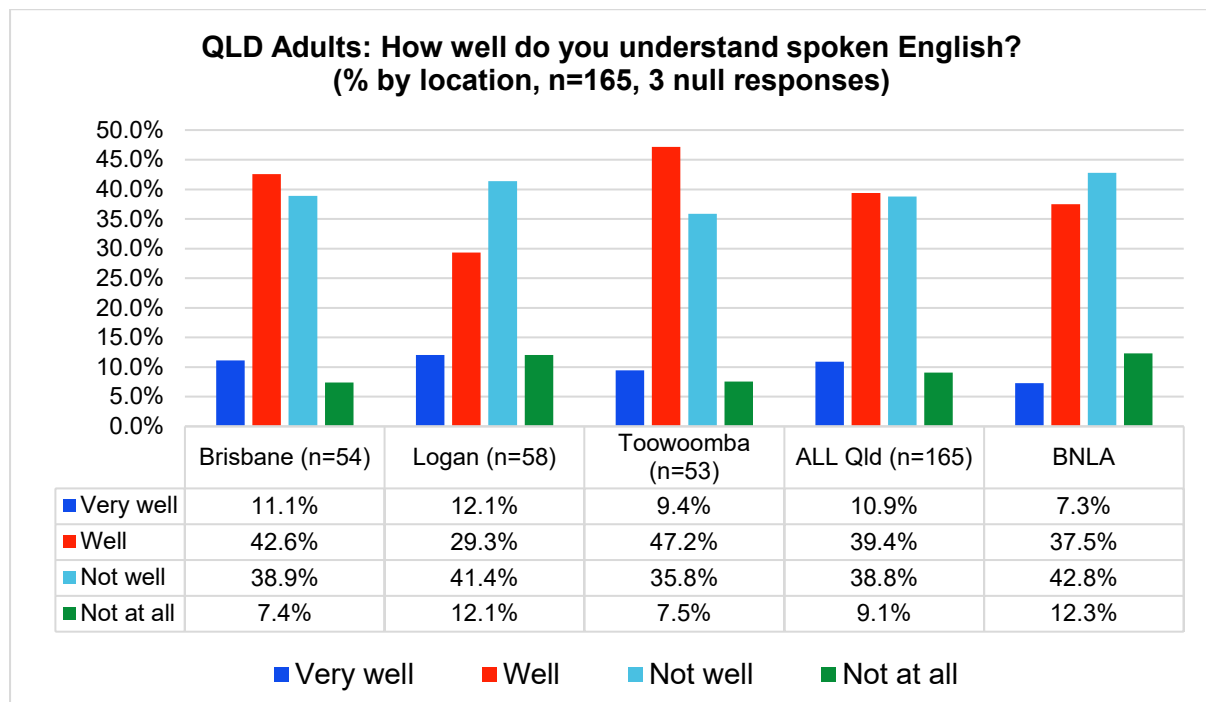
Learning to speak English, getting a job, communicating with neighbours, feeling safe and welcome are critical elements of successful settlement whatever theory or definition of integration is utilised. In this section of the report we analyse the responses to our surveys asking questions that relate to these matters. In our surveys of the refugee adult and young informants we asked them to rate their English language abilities, tell us about their employment experiences and talk about their assessment of the degree of safety in their neighbourhoods, the friendliness of locals and neighbours and their overall assessment of life in Australia and the future for their children. In choosing these questions we linked to those asked in the longitudinal survey of refugees in Australia (BNLA) so that we could compare the settlement outcomes of our refugee informants with other refugee arrivals in Australia. Moreover, we will revisit these refugee informants in 2019 and again in 2020 so that for each adult and child we can trace their English language ability, work experiences, and social interaction over the three year period.

6.1 Language

A key issue for all migrants settling in Australia – be they refugees or not – is the need to become fluent in reading, writing, listening/understanding and speaking English.

6.1.1 Adults and the English language

Since the refugee informants in our study come from Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan it is likely that many do not have strong English on arrival. This is confirmed in Figure 6.1.1 which shows that in the national BNLA longitudinal survey of refugees only 7.3% self-assessed that they were able to **listen** to the English language ‘very well’ while another 37.5% said that they could listen ‘well’. The majority of refugees in the BNLA survey said that their listening ability for English was either ‘not well’ or that they couldn’t understand spoken English at all. For the Qld adults in this study, levels of English comprehension were slightly superior to BNLA findings, despite the fact that most of those surveyed had only been in Australia for 12 months, while refugees participating in the BNLA study had been in Australia for at least two years (at the time data was collected in Wave 3; see <http://www3.aifs.gov.au/bnla/>). Refugees who settled in Toowoomba had the best listening ability for English among the newly-arrived refugees to Queensland in their own assessment: 56.6% could listen ‘well’ or ‘very well’.

Figure 6.1.1: Qld Adults: ability to listen to English language, by location*

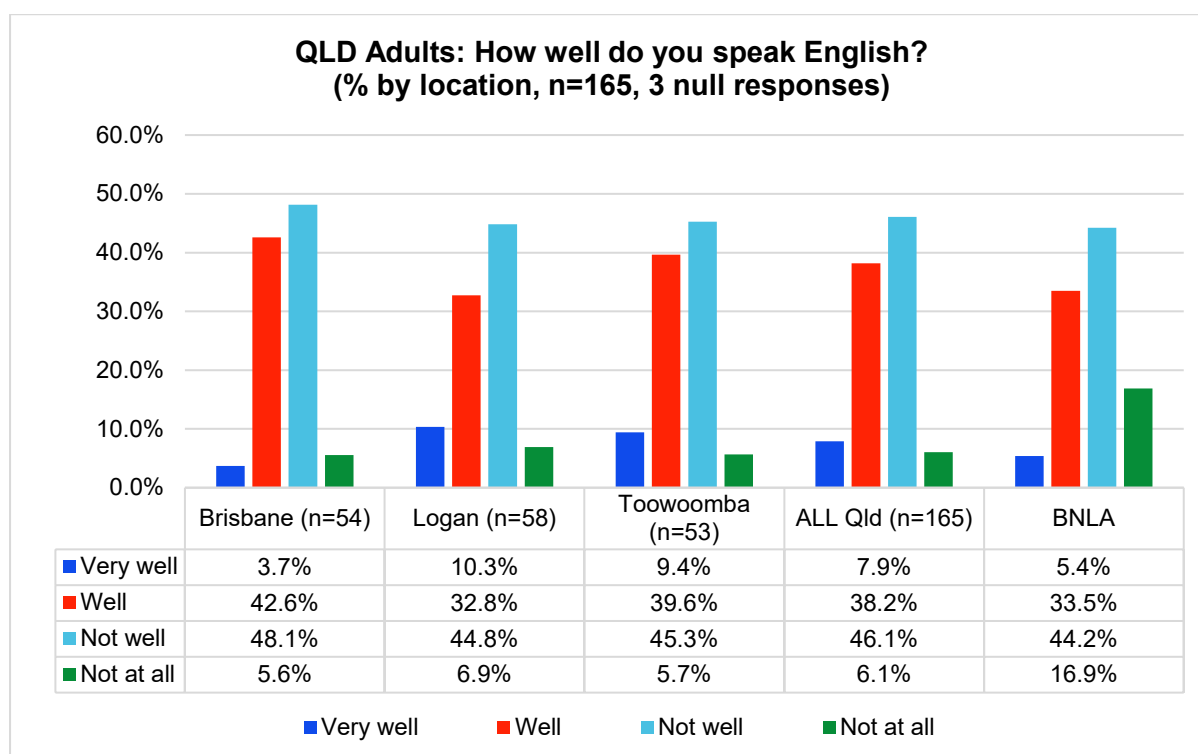
* Since blank or invalid (null) responses are included in the total number of responses for calculation of percentages, but not shown in the charts, some percentages will not add up to 100%. The remainder represents the null responses. For example, in Figure 6.1.1, the percentages for Logan total 94.9%; 3 null responses for Logan (5.1%) bring the total to 100%.

An insight into this difference might be contained in the fact that there is great diversity in the English classes in Toowoomba. Two comments stand out in this regard. The first is on the multicultural nature of classes in Toowoomba:

It is very good for me, especially I met with different nationalities from Chinese people or Japanese or something like that. I meet with them, talk with them, make a conversation. It's helped me to improve my English.
(Male, Mt.Lofty, 2018)

The second is a reflection from a Brisbane informant.

You can't learn English in Sydney because there is maybe 30,000 Armenian and Arabic people. You can't learn English. I have a friend, Armenian friend in Sydney. He is working car technician, mechanic. So he told me 'I can't speak English like you'. I'm here, I think it's been two years. He's been two years in Sydney. He told me 'I can't speak English like you. You speak English better than me', because he has Armenian and Arabic friends. They don't need English language.
(Young male, Bracken Ridge, 2018)

Figure 6.1.2: Qld Adults: speaking ability by location

Similarly, when asked about their English **speaking** ability, more Qld adults believed that they could speak English 'very well' or 'well' (46.1%) than those surveyed in BNLA (38.9%) (see Figure 6.1.2). Again, Toowoomba refugees stood out, with 49.0% saying that they spoke English 'very well' or 'well'. One man said:

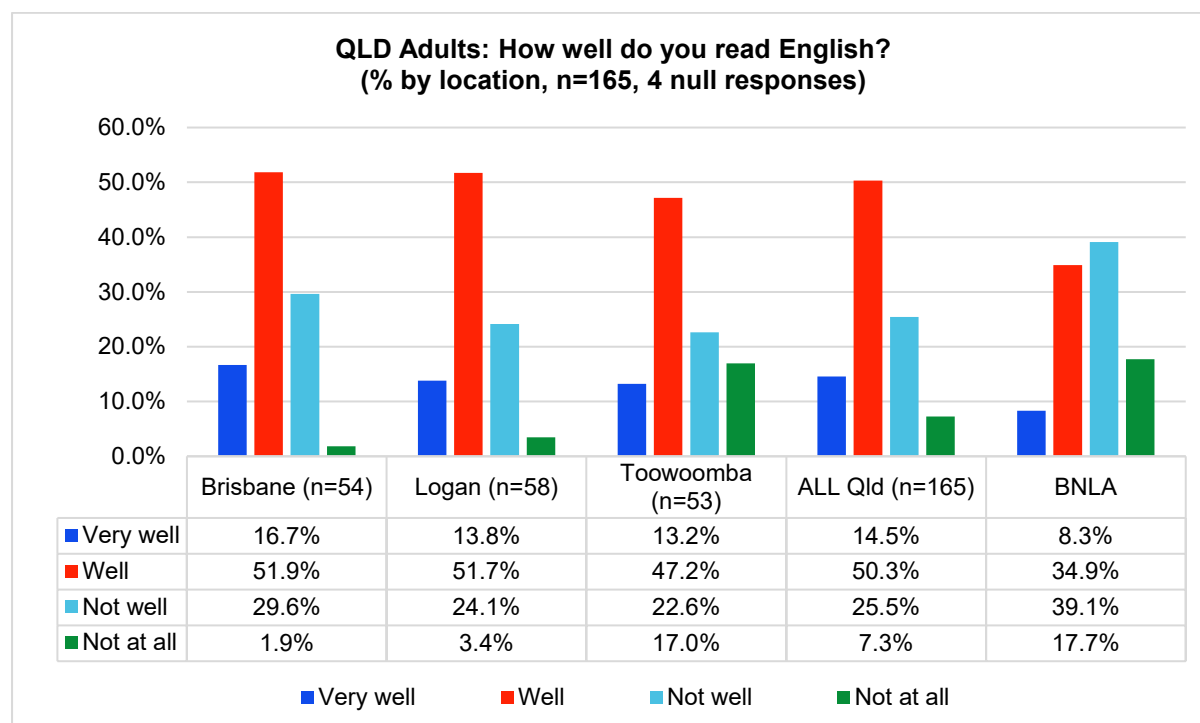
We don't care about Christian or Muslim, we just care that we can talk to each other and be understood and can communicate.
(Male, Newtown, 2018)

However, the cultural uses of language are also at the heart of speaking:

Here is a different culture from where we came from. There is much difference between the cultures. [Here] every person is responsible about himself, every person can like his life. In my country, you live as a family, as a group. Maybe the language is a problem because language is the first way to contact ...
(Male, Brendale, 2018)

When it comes to **reading** English (see Figure 6.1.3), 64.8% of Queensland's newly-arrived refugees indicated that they could read English 'very well' or 'well' compared to 43.2% of the BNLA refugees.

Figure 6.1.3: Qld Adults: reading ability by location



Yet again, reading for specific purposes is another issue altogether as this man notes:

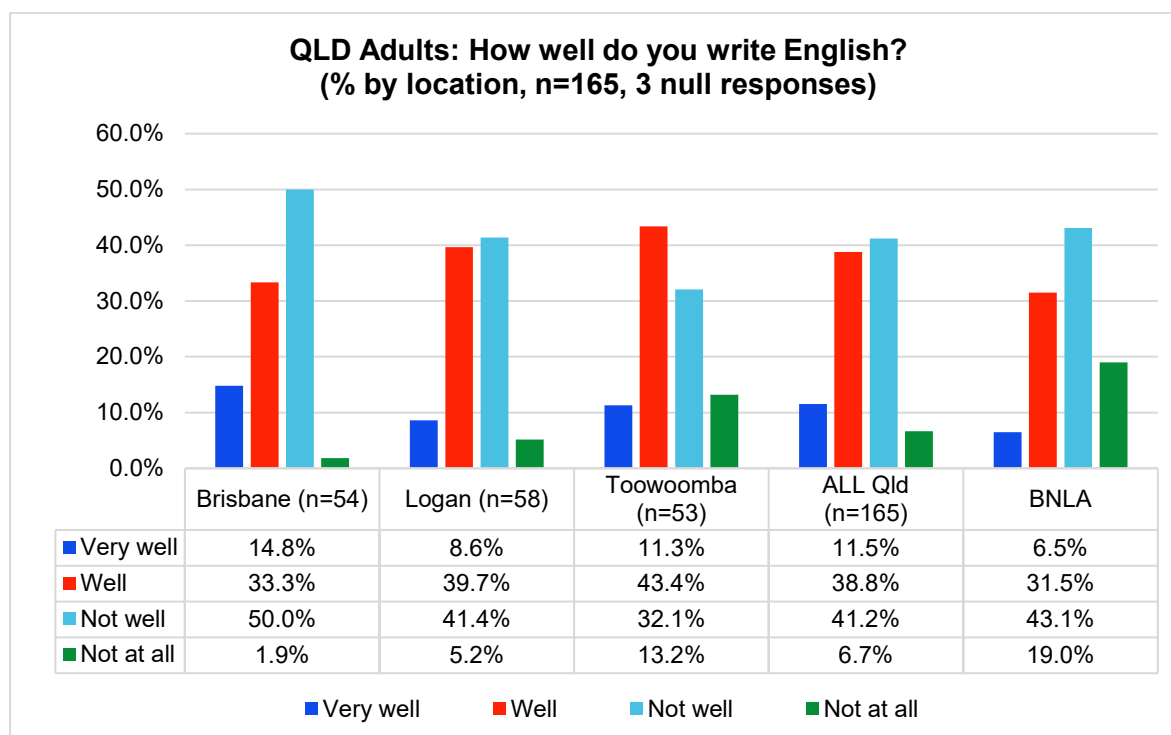
They do a training for forklift driving, yeah, so I did the driving and I passed that, but then, they give me questions to answer, in English, so they didn't give me a certificate. Why do you let me go to this training, because you are not going to give me a certificate and you are going to ask me in [written] English.
(Male, Waterford, 2018)

And professional language is another issue again:

The legal language is extremely hard and luckily I had this teacher at [university name omitted], she gave me a book before getting into this degree in December and I studied that. It was just the basics of law, but I am still finding it very hard. I'm still getting used to it. English, as a language itself, it's very hard, you know.'
(Single female, South Toowoomba, 2018)

Finally, when it comes to **writing** English (see Figure 6.1.4), more Qld adults (50.3%) believed that they could write English 'very well' or 'well' than shown in the BNLA results (38.0%).

Figure 6.1.4: Qld Adults: writing ability by location



This informant talked about a different way of writing, new to many who have not been taught to write in this manner:

Yeah, it's [TAFE English] very useful, good for writing. I did just one term at TAFE, and I start now, I learned how I can write a narrative, so I became more confident.

(Male, Chermside, 2018)

But of course, it isn't all easy and while a majority assessed their capacities as 'good', there were still those who worried about not being good enough. Suggestions for separation by age were as this man commented:

I go up there sometimes and they give us not that good studying material and some teachers are so fast, especially for us at their age. I just suggested to separate the classes. I mean put the age classes, like a class for the youngest people and a class for the older people and they can just make it easier for the older people.

(Male, Bracken Ridge, 2018)

If English-language ability is a key to successful settlement in Australia for refugees, it appears that the Qld informants have a much better start than other refugee arrivals over the past decade or so. Partly this could be explained by the fact that the 12,000 Syrian-conflict refugees were cherry-picked by the Australian government not only in terms of religion (Christian) but also in terms of a high level of professional or technical employment skills, which is also accompanied by prior knowledge of English. By 2020, when we finally interview these refugee families, we can expect these results to be much stronger, adding to their strong settlement prospects in Queensland.

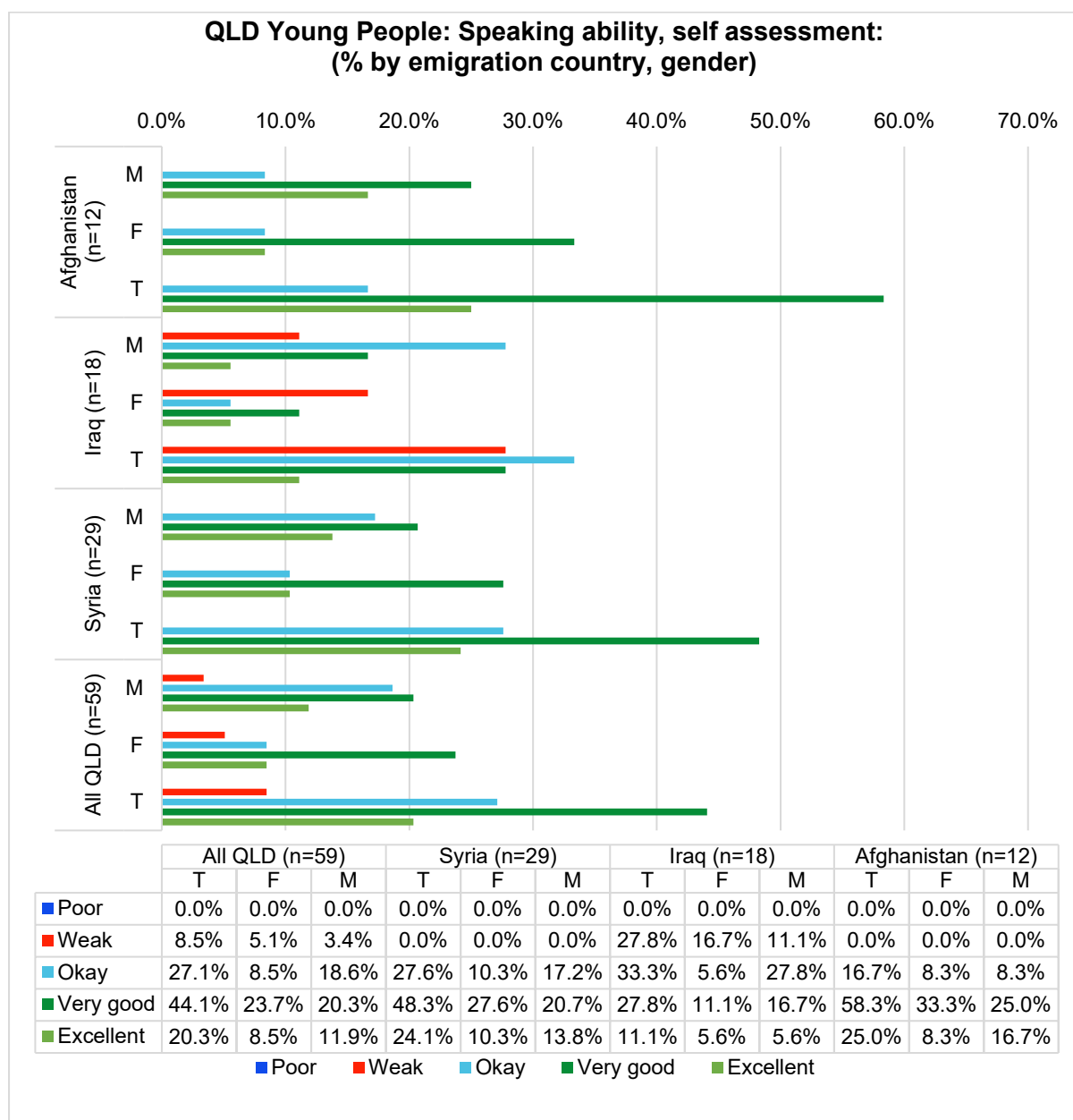
6.1.2 Young people and the English language

Young people from all three emigration countries tended to assess their speaking ability as 'okay' to 'very good' (see Figure 6.1.5). They are much more attuned to needing to mix in with the locals and are aware of different registers that exist in the school yard, on the streets and in popular culture. The following comment sums this up quite well:

But the problem is at my school, I learn just the formal words, like you know you just learn the formal words. Yeah, that is problem. Yes, I want to know the colloquial English. Like many peoples... when like I do the conversation for example, like some people give the Aussie, the Aussie language. It is different language.

(Young female, age 11, Chermside, 2018)

Figure 6.1.5: Qld young people: speaking ability, by emigration country and gender



Young people of both genders tended to assess their speaking ability as 'okay' to 'very good'; this was largely consistent between locations (see Figure 6.1.5). Speaking requires considerable confidence and the young people explained how this impacts on them and how Australian English is different yet again from British and American accents that they often heard back in their country of origin. Also, if they had experience of English it was often quite different to their current education.

Well talking about my Year 6, I had problems with speaking – about for two months – and I think I was kind of depressed of life. I was good after two months. I could speak, but yeah, didn't feel confident. I couldn't know what people were saying. Yeah because we used to speak American English.

(Young male, age 12, South Toowoomba, 2018)

We learned the basic English, like vocabulary, and grammar in Syria, yes. Public school. [The teacher had] a really heavy Arabic accent.

(Young female, in Year 12, Marsden, 2018)

And speaking English is critical to feeling that you belong and can make friends:

It was like I couldn't speak English and I didn't have friends. So I was by myself and then after two weeks, a month or something like this, I learnt English and I got new friends.

(Young person, age 12, Loganlea, 2018)

That affected my feelings, or the way I was acting, so I was afraid that they would judge me, if I said something wrong.

(Young female, in Year 12, Marsden, 2018)

But the young people also bring linguistic capital, a form of cultural capital (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990) in their multilingual capacities. They see speaking English as an extension of their linguistic repertoire.

I can speak four languages. I can speak Turkish and Armenian. I have got English and I don't speak Arabic. But my friends just teach me how to speak Arabic. [At home I speak] Armenian. I teach my friends and now she can speak Armenian.

(Young female, age 6, Bracken Ridge, 2018)

Oh, yeah, because I can speak English and Arabic and French and I'm learning also different languages. I'm learning Chinese.

(Young male, age 16, Runcorn, 2018)

Reading ability was strongest amongst young people from Afghanistan followed by those from Syria (see Table 6.1.1). Young people born in Iraq reported the lowest levels of reading ability. Logan had the highest proportion of young people (55.5%) who assessed their reading ability as 'very good' or 'excellent', compared to Brisbane (33.3%) and Toowoomba (47.8%) (see Table 6.1.2).

Table 6.1.1: Qld young people: reading ability, by emigration country

Qld Young People reading ability, self-assessment (% by emigration country)				
	Afghanistan (n=12)	Iraq (n=18)	Syria (n=29)	All Qld (n=59)
Poor	8.3%	0.0%	0.0%	1.7%
Weak	0.0%	27.8%	17.2%	16.9%
Okay	25.0%	44.4%	27.6%	32.2%
Very good	50.0%	16.7%	37.9%	33.9%
Excellent	16.7%	11.1%	17.2%	15.3%

Table 6.1.2: Qld young people: reading ability, by location

Qld Young People reading ability, self-assessment (% by location)				
	Brisbane (n=9)	Logan (n=27)	Toowoomba (n=23)	All Qld (n=59)
Poor	0.0%	0.0%	4.3%	1.7%
Weak	11.1%	22.2%	13.0%	16.9%
Okay	55.6%	22.2%	34.8%	32.2%
Very good	22.2%	33.3%	39.1%	33.9%
Excellent	11.1%	22.2%	8.7%	15.3%

Reading is a safe way to understand your new world, where accent or mistakes don't matter. It also helps to fill in the time. A thirteen-year-old Syrian girl living in Toowoomba said:

But in the holidays nothing to do. No I don't see friends from school in the holidays because all of them are far from here. Yes, some come from farms so very far from here. Yes, there's not very good public transport. So maybe reading a book or I have – it's perfect if I have homework.

Another young person from Newtown said similar:

Well, actually, like, that was this year that I feel like I sort of settled in. Because I did a lot of work during the holidays, like, I've read three books; three big English [books].

Another from Marsden had a strategy he had learned:

I do need to learn more, like, English. I don't read so good. I try to spell the word so I can write it. If it's hard story and I get..., if it's a little bit easy, yes, I can.

Qld young people were somewhat confident about their English writing ability, with most assessing themselves as 'okay' to 'very good' (see Table 6.1.3); listening ability assessments were similar (see Table 6.1.4).

Table 6.1.3: Qld young people: Writing ability by location and gender

Qld Young People writing ability, self-assessment (% by location)				
	Brisbane (n=9)	Logan (n=27)	Toowoomba (n=23)	All Qld (n=59)
Poor	11.1%	3.7%	4.3%	5.1%
Weak	11.1%	11.1%	8.7%	10.2%
Okay	33.3%	37.0%	43.5%	39.0%
Very good	44.4%	33.3%	30.4%	33.9%
Excellent	0.0%	14.8%	13.0%	11.9%

Table 6.1.4: Qld young people: Listening ability by location and gender

Qld Young People listening ability, self-assessment (% by location, 2 null responses)				
	Brisbane (n=9)	Logan (n=27)	Toowoomba (n=23)	All Qld (n=59)
Poor	0.0%	0.0%	4.5%	1.8%
Weak	0.0%	3.7%	4.5%	3.5%
Okay	50.0%	11.1%	27.3%	22.8%
Very good	37.5%	51.9%	50.0%	49.1%
Excellent	12.5%	33.3%	13.6%	22.8%

Writing is something that is a little different in Australia. The tradition of writing narratives is new. Some find it challenging while others find they really enjoy it. This eight-year-old from Logan said with pure joy:

Excellent English. Yes, I like reading stories. Yes, I like writing stories. Yes, I am excellent at it.

In conclusion, in regard to English skills, from the survey data the young people assume they know English well enough, and from the interviews that also comes out. Transcribed interviews reveal that interviewers often compliment the English skills of the young people. As can be seen above, issues are with understanding conversational English and mastering Aussie slang.

6.2 Stories from adult refugees

6.2.1 Employment

Of the three states sampled, Qld had the most successful employment outcomes for newly-arrived refugees from Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan – 17.0%, compared to 11.0% in NSW and 7.8% in Victoria – although this was below the percentage (21.2%) found in the BNLA (see Figure 6.2.1).

Of the locations sampled within Qld, Brisbane had the highest employment rate (24.1%) and the lowest “not employed” (70.4%) compared to Toowoomba and Logan, and a higher percentage than that found in the BNLA (see Figure 6.2.2).

Figure 6.2.1: Percentage of adults employed, by state

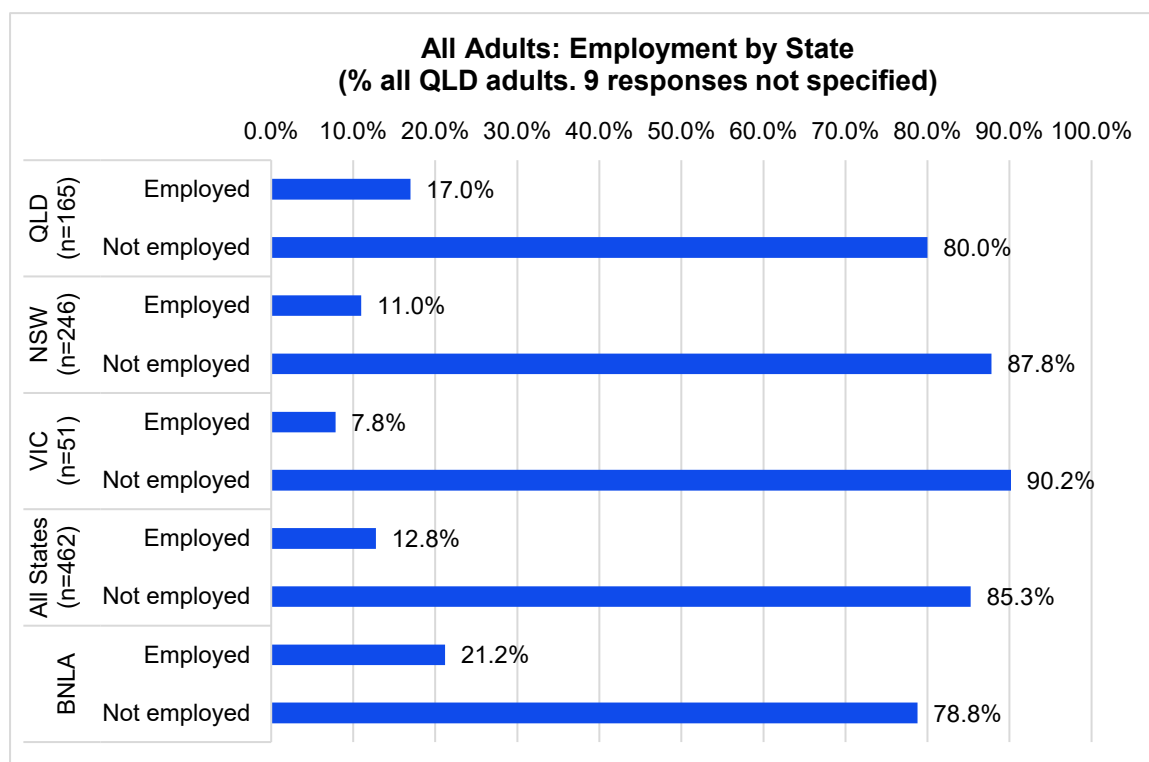
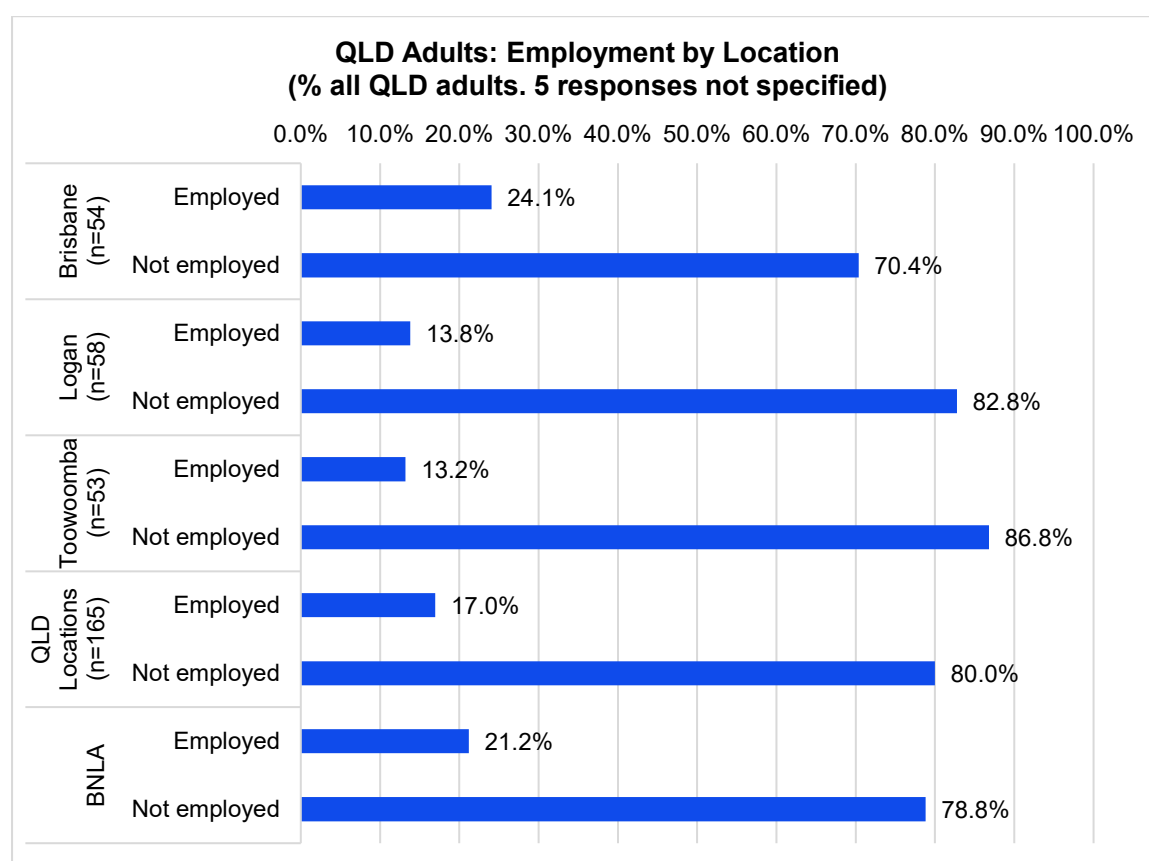
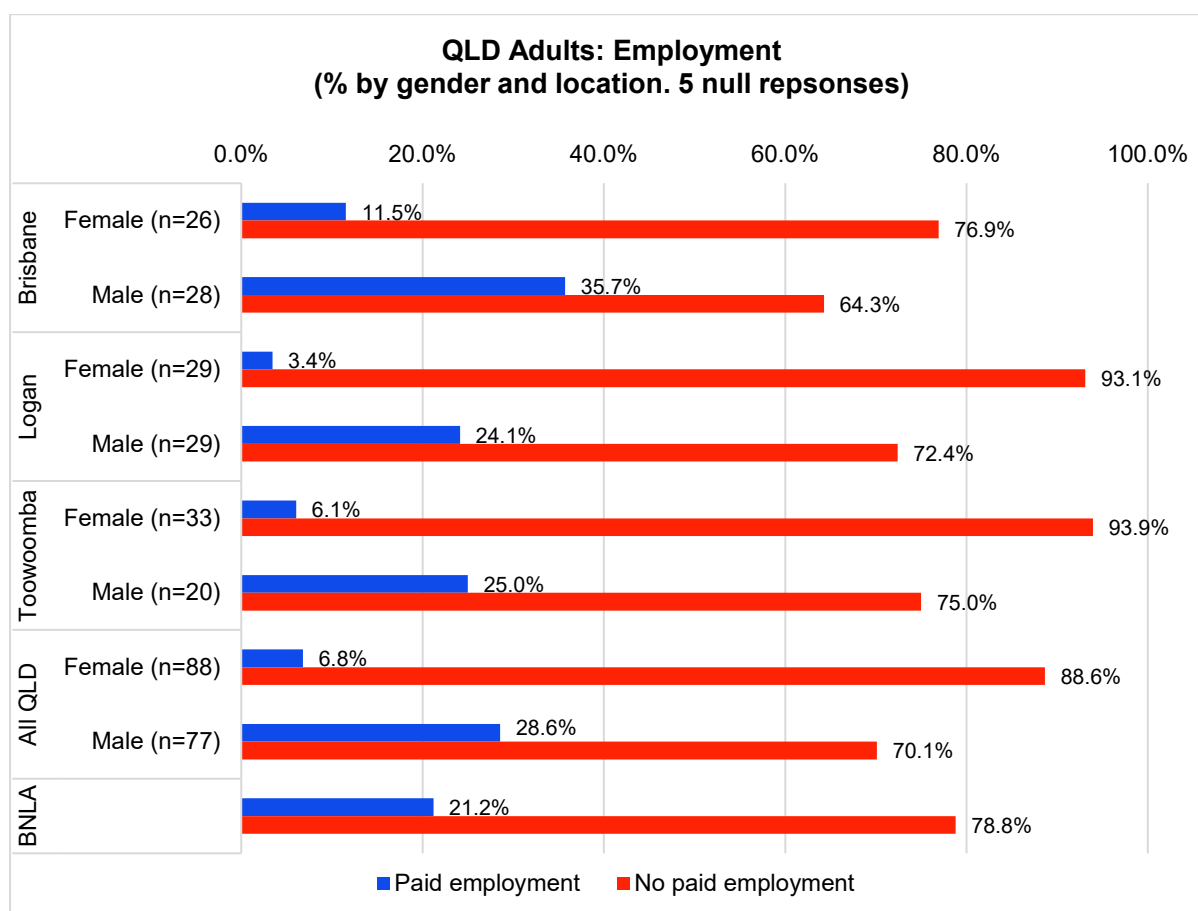
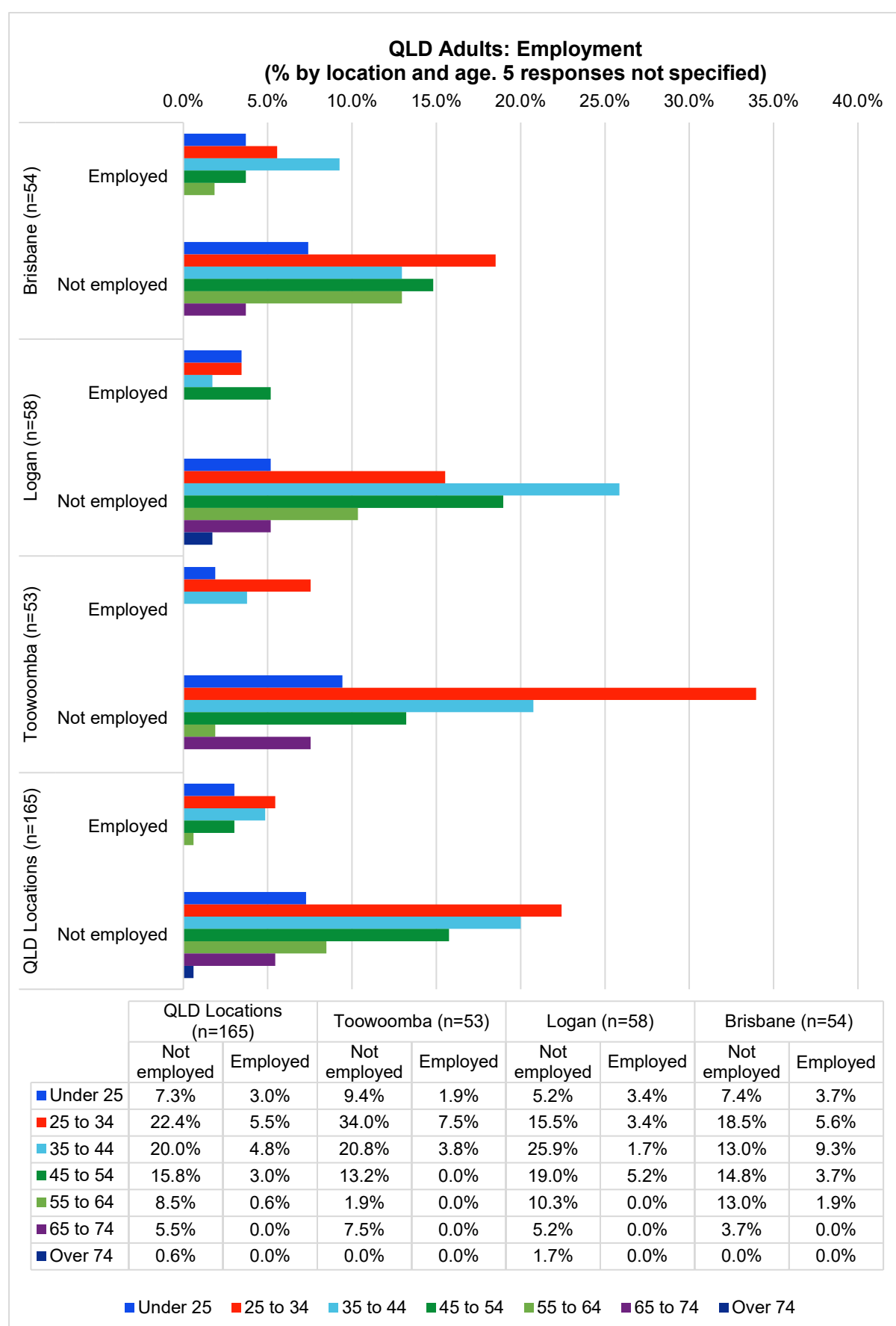


Figure 6.2.2: Percentage of Qld adults employed, by location

The refugees had a broad range of skills, qualifications, educational levels and vocational experience/s. Gender and age were two key variables which featured in the discussions around employment aspirations, experience and outcomes. Employment outcomes for Qld respondents, by gender and by age, are shown in Figures 6.2.3 and 6.2.4 respectively. Only 6.8% of female informants in Qld were employed while 28.6% of male informants in Qld were employed. A high proportion of 25 to 34 year-olds were employed in Toowoomba, whereas more people in the older age groups were employed in Brisbane (see Figure 6.2.4).

Figure 6.2.3: Percentage of Qld adults employed, by location and gender

Notably, most of the interviews with refugee families in all states focused on the importance of gaining access to employment for the family unit. This was particularly the case for the male head of the household with the majority of the women noting that they had not worked in the public sphere, pre-migration. For those women who were in employment pre-migration, this was seen to be an important step in the process of settlement for them and their family. For older workers the struggles with qualifications/certificate recognition and related health issues made for a bleak future. Adding to the hurdles noted by older refugees was the difficulty experienced in learning English.

Figure 6.2.4: Percentage of Qld adults employed, by location and age

In order to understand these results, it is important to remember that most of the refugees interviewed and surveyed had arrived in the previous 12 months. Most of these informants were still learning English at TAFE and elsewhere, so they had not in fact been looking for a job. English language competency (see 6.1 above) was raised as an important stepping stone into the Australian labour market and notably created the biggest hurdle in accessing employment:

No, no work. Because I need to... more learning English, because my job... I don't... how I do it here, because I need the English very well.
(Male, Bracken Ridge, 2018)

Just making things easy for employment. Like, hundreds of companies needs that people, the experienced people, but they are not employing us. They are not hiring us to do this job maybe because of the English barrier. Like, in the job I'm doing now just, like, telling me what to do. I don't need that much of – of English and from my experience I know what I have to do before even telling me what I have to do. So just making employment easier; hiring people it would be the only thing that I would speak of them to.
(Male, Chermside, 2018)

If I can't speak English, how can I work?
(Male, Holland Park West, 2018)

The questions probing refugees on employment were derived from the BNLA survey (as was the case of other questions in the survey). While the results give a clear picture of how many refugees have found employment, the picture around refugee unemployment is much more muddy. The question did not allow for respondents to tick a third option: 'I am not yet looking for work'. To be defined as unemployed a person has to be actively looking for work and not find a job. In other words, the above tables do not contain an unemployment rate as many of those refugees not in employment will not yet be in the labour market. When we return to these refugee families in 2019 and 2020 most will have finished their English language classes and be actively looking for work. We can expect that the employment figures will increase while those not in employment will be reduced considerably.

When we explored the experiences that the refugee informants faced in getting employment, English language competency, qualifications recognition and the adequacy of employment services to deal with their particular employment concerns were the major issues mentioned.

English language competency

The importance of **English language competency** to gain employment in Australia has been evident in over seven decades of post-war migration and is one obstacle the refugees share with other migrants arriving from non-English-speaking countries. In terms of the service providers of English, TAFE in Brisbane was given a glowing report by the respondents. The delivery of language classes through this avenue was considered to be an excellent starting point for the basics.

In Germany, language training occurs at the workplace rather than in the classroom (<https://www.netzwerk-iq.de/network-iq-start-page/language-training.html>). The benefits of learning English on the job by practising and interacting with locals was emphasised by several of our respondents, as captured in the following:

If we learn language. So I say that if we all... Arabic people in the TAFE, we study, that's okay; but we came in the TAFE... finish, we must have something with work [practice]. I think the [practice] is the best way to learn English.

(Female, Bracken Ridge, 2018)

You can't learn English in Sydney because there is maybe 30,000 Armenian and Arabic people. You can't learn English. I have a friend, Armenian friend in Sydney. He is working car technician, mechanic. So he told me I can't speak English like you. I'm here, I think it's been two years. He's been two years in Sydney. He told me I can't speak English like you. You speak English better than me, because he has Armenian and Arabic friends. They don't need English language.'

(Young male, Bracken Ridge, 2018)

Learning English from work is better than English classes.

(Male, Brendale, 2018).

We explore the issues related to education in more detail later in this report.

Employment services: 'Survival Jobs'

Nationally there were criticisms raised of the services offered by Jobactive providers such as the lack of focus on matching the refugees to meaningful employment. Respondents in Queensland were largely consistent in this trend. The positive responses for the services and support provided by Jobactive were few and far between; support was guided by a willingness on the part of the refugees to take-on lower-level and/or entry positions, or where they had been more persistent in getting Jobactive to help them. One of our Queensland interviewees stood out in light of the approach taken by employment support services. One of the success stories was noted in the following respondent's experience:

Jobactive – I asked them to find a job for me. They gave me a phone call every week. I have an appointment with the Jobactive every week. They looked after me. They helped me. In two months, maybe two months, I found a job. Cabinetmaker. No, no qualification. I have experience. They tried me for two weeks. They told me, 'We'll try you.' Yeah, very lucky because they are very good people. I have experience. They tried me. After two weeks, they said, 'Yes, you can work as a casual full time'. After three months, they always say that, they signed me as permanent. Full time with overtime.

(Male, Brendale, 2018)

For the vast majority, '*survival jobs*' captured their experience, a term noted by one of the respondents which described lower-skilled/entry level temporary positions, which, while not providing long-term security and meaningful employment prospects, do provide a means to survive in the present moment.

The following quotes capture the approach taken largely by Jobactive service providers:

When we went to Jobactive I talk to staff there. I said 'if you find me jeweller job I will work. Today I will start to work, but if you say there is some job, there is no certificate, I will work for one year, two years and then I will stay at home. I don't want that. So I'm hearing there is some people working packaging. There is no future' I said to her. I have my job. I have certificate in Syria. I want to doing my job. I don't want any job there is no certificate. After five years, what I will do?
(Young male, Bracken Ridge, 2018)

But my job, my case manager in Jobactive, she advised me to work many jobs, she advised me as a truck driver, and just I start that two days ago, working as a truck driver. And I accept that, it's not my goal, I accept that because I need work, to support my family, pay bills, everything. So – I cannot stay without working.

(Male, Chermside, 2018)

Of her husband, one respondent noted:

'He must change his mind to something not familiar to his job is Iraq, like security. He's working the nightshift'

(Female, Fitzgibbon, 2018).

And the Jobactive we spoke about them because they don't do anything for us. I don't know if they take money from government and they, yeah, and they give us every fortnight appointments and we say – and they said, 'yeah, we are looking for – for jobs for you and for...', yeah, 'don't worry, don't worry'. Still like that for one year. Maybe can still forever. I don't know.

(Young male, East Brisbane, 2018)

We just need somebody to talk to us about 'what is your skills' and in the same time 'what is your ambition here' and 'would you like to open your own business. If yes, we can help you with that', because as a refugee we came without any capital with us, so it's very hard.

(Young male, Lawnton, 2018)

Issues surrounding self-employment were raised by a number of refugees. There is a well-founded literature not only indicating the skills and qualifications of particular groups of refugees who are business owners, but also the importance of this as an option for those who need to work and face incredible obstacles in gaining skills and qualifications accreditation.

Qualifications recognition

Many refugees and humanitarian immigrants arrive in Australia with professional qualifications and work experience. This is particularly the case with recently-arrived Syrian refugees: many of those we interviewed were health professionals, engineers, architects, pharmacists, IT and finance professionals and the like back in Syria. Many others – including those from Iraq – were mechanics, drivers, plumbers or electricians or held similar trades. The recognition in Australia of their professional and technical skills is a great and often unsurmountable barrier to their gaining similar employment in Australia. This has great cost to the refugee families themselves, but also great cost to the nation. All the refugees we interviewed were very grateful for the opportunity provided by Australia to provide refuge for their families. They all want to repay that by contributing to Australia through their employment expertise. The problems surrounding the recognition of skills and professional qualifications have been long-standing in Australia (Reid et al. 2014: 85-103) and apply not only to refugees but to skilled permanent and temporary immigrants.

The problem with the recognition, you know. I had the qualification for the philosophy and I got all the transcript in it for six years. I went to make the recognition but they asked me to do a test first and after that I can start from the beginning, studying, I mean. I went to the [college name omitted] and talked with them and they told me the same thing. After that, I chose to work. I started working.

(Male, Brendale, 2018)

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.

(Male, Chermside, 2018)

Of self-employment and the pathways offered by the growing gig economy respondents said the following:

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.

(Male, Bracken Ridge, 2018)

Hopefully yes [I will start my own business], but in the same time I need to look to my age, and in the same time it takes a long time to open a new business.

(Male, Chermside, 2018)

Since I've been here in Australia, I start working as an Uber driver. You know Uber? Because I don't like to just sit at home and do nothing. I start work, I borrow some money from friends, they help me to buy a car, and I start working in Uber, study and work in the evening. Uber Eats. Food delivery.

(Male, Chermside, 2018)

Yeah, because it became too slow working or a little work because as you know at Uber you have wait the order thing and you have to – so as you see many peoples, especially Syrian and Iraqi people, working this area. Not the – not the one I was working is Uber. I saw many people from different country: Chinese, Indian, Brazilians.

(Young male, East Brisbane, 2018)

Finally, the importance of social capital or network capital – particularly ethno-specific networks – was raised by several of the respondents as key to gaining access to the Australian labour market:

Maybe finding relationships, you know, like friends and making friends here, you get more people so you will have more often jobs, for example.

(Male, Brendale, 2018)

I went to Sydney to visit my cousin and I worked for a week there in Sydney. I just been introduced to how to work here in Australia and to do the painting thing, and I am happy having his job here.

(Male, Chermside, 2018)

In Sydney, yeah, it will be easier to do this because lots of Arab there, so they will try to tell you what to do because they have passed the same thing. But Syrians short in Brisbane. I have to first know some Australians doing the same business to tell me what I have to do.

(Male, Chermside, 2018).

The importance of finding work to newly-arrived refugees

One frustration expressed by many refugee informants relates to the fact that they are not given the opportunity to demonstrate their capacity for work. Most of the informants were proud of their career achievements prior to the conflicts that displaced them from Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan. Many were very successful in their career. They are very eager to get work and contribute to Australia society. The following quotes from refugee informants highlight the situation:

Work was central to their pre-migration life. In the words of two informants:

Something of our culture, we like to work all the time, we like to have work, to do something, not just sitting, because that's crazy if we sit all the time. It's important that the people who come here, before they come, that it's hard to find a job, even if you have a qualification.

(Male, Waterford, 2018)

In our country, if you work hard, you not be sure you get good result. But here, in Australia, if you work hard, you will get good result. So that what most of the Syrian families try to do. Everyone work hard.

(Male, Toowoomba, 2018)

Finding a job in Australia was the most important settlement issue identified by our refugee informants. As one informant living in Toowoomba put it:

As you know everybody is suffering from the working issue, from applying for any job. So yes, that's the main problem with any family, Iraqi or Syrian family. They only need the jobs – or even at least the husband or the man of the family can get a job just to make the financial issues better and better. This is the only thing we hope to be good.

(Female, South Toowoomba, 2018)

Work is central to settlement outcomes:

When you have something [a job] to rely on, that's a little bit more pushed towards settlement.

(Young male, Marsden, 2018)

We are new in this country. We are not start working. When you start working you will have so much friend. You can speak English more good. You can doing friend.

(Young male, Bracken Ridge, 2018)

Most of the adult refugees who we met during this research project found the transition to life in Australia most difficult because of one key issue: while in Syria, Iraq or Afghanistan the men in particular worked hard and enjoyed their jobs, but in Australia these men spend most

of their time, when they are not at TAFE learning English, sitting around the home. Many are extremely bored. As one informant from Logan put it:

Another thing, if anyone stay all day at home, it will be boring. When anyone have job, part time, fulltime, they feel happy and they learn more from the rule, from the language, from the people.

(Female, Loganlea, 2018)

For their first year or so of settlement in Australia many refugee couples are spending long hours at home together, a situation that is foreign to them. The issue of boredom is real: there is a need for perhaps more out-of-the-home activities for these refugees, particularly the males. This also puts stress on relationships between husbands and wives.

The Catch 22: Australian work experience and Recognition of Prior Learning

Most of the adult refugees interviewed raised a Catch 22 that they faced when trying to get a job in Australia: when they applied for a job they were asked if they had prior Australian employment experience. Because they didn't, they were not successful in getting the job. The policy implication here is that it is critical that all newly-arrived refugees get access to temporary Australian work experience after their English achieves the appropriate standards. There are a range of initiatives from the corporate, Small and Medium Enterprises (SME), public and social enterprise sectors including successful pilot attempts in Australia and other countries to address this issue (Collins, 2017a). The refugee informants were very insistent that if given the opportunity to demonstrate their level of employment and skill capability to Australian employers they would be hired. The frustration was that since they did not get a foot in the employment door – rejected because of their lack of Australian employment experience – they could not get an opportunity to demonstrate their ability. One informant – a hairdresser who was famous in his home country – lied to his employer about having prior Australian employment. He was given the opportunity to work for one day and was hired – permanently and full-time – before the day was over, once his skills as a hairdresser had been demonstrated. Highly qualified professionals – engineers, pharmacists, medical professionals, dentists, architects – were particularly frustrated with the lack of progress and prospects for using their qualifications and work experience and for their achievements being recognised in Australia.

Two informants from Logan spoke about their frustration in this regard:

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.

(Female, Marsden, 2018)

The government of Australia selects people who have high qualifications. Now, I already have a high qualification and I live here in Australia, but no job, no work.

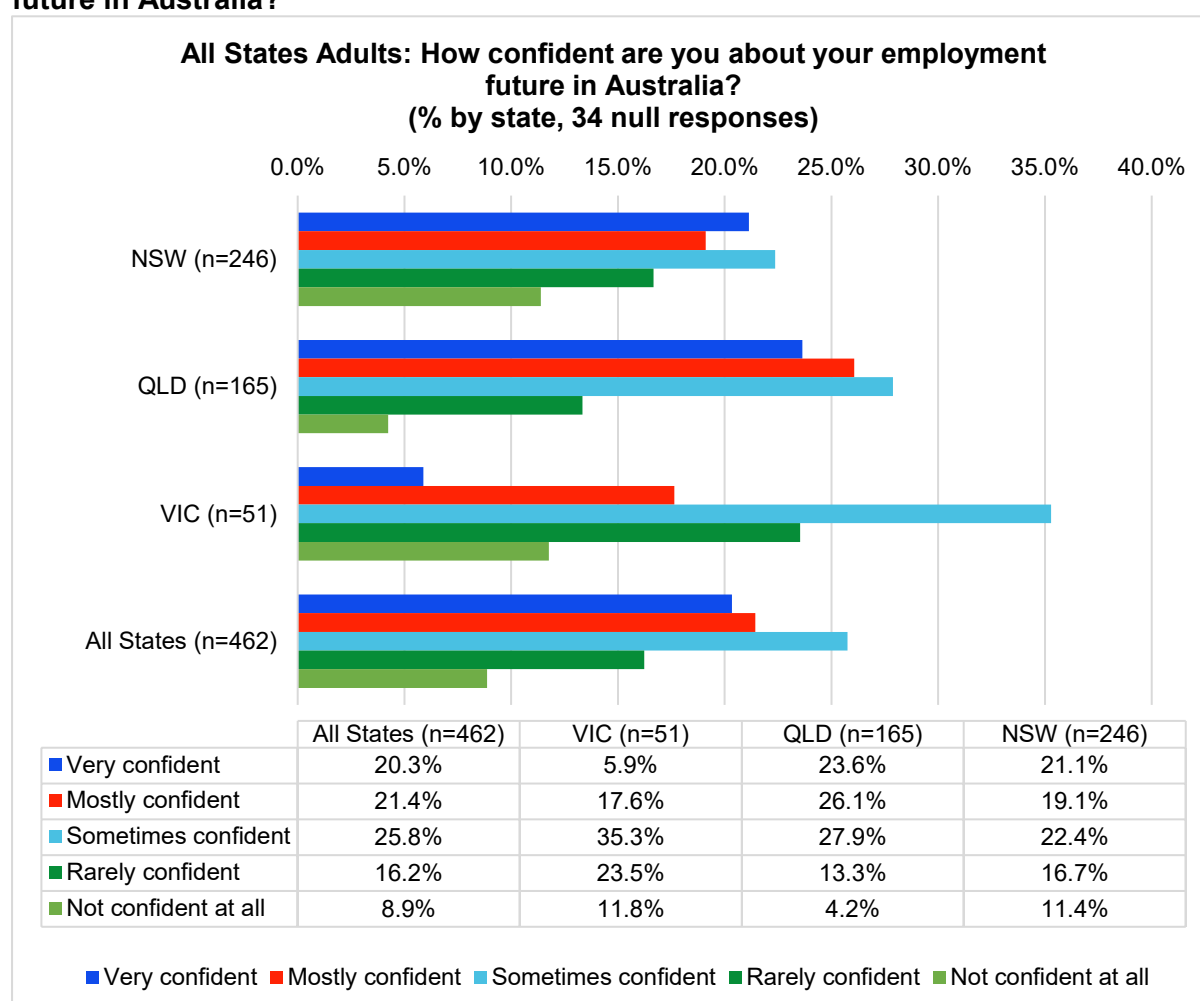
(Male, Woodbridge, 2018)

The key policy initiative required in this regard is a guarantee that all newly-arrived refugees of working age get access to 4-8 weeks of work experience after their English is at a suitable level. There is a need for a new Federal government scheme to be developed to provide access to work experience to those refugees who cannot gain access to other schemes provided by the corporate, SME, public and social enterprise sectors.

Future employment prospects

All the research in Australia and other countries agrees that finding employment is a key to the successful settlement of refugee families in countries like Australia and states like Queensland. The data presented in the Figures above shows that very few of the recently arrived refugees have found employment in Australia. As our research has found, this is a matter of great frustration to most of the refugee informants. Despite this, half of the newly arrived refugees in Queensland are optimistic ('very confident' or 'mostly confident'; see Figure 6.2.5) about their employment future, compared to four out of ten refugees in NSW and about one in four of the newly arrived refugees in Victoria. **Clearly, finding employment for the Syrian-conflict refugee intake and other refugees who arrive in the annual humanitarian intake is perhaps the most important issue impacting on the settlement outcomes of these newly-arrived refugee families.**

Figure 6.2.5: Percentage of adults: how confident are you about your employment future in Australia?



6.2.2. Settlement

While finding employment is central to successful settlement outcomes of refugees, there are many other aspects of life in Australia that impact on successful settlement experiences. One is the extent to which the refugees are accepted into their local community by their multicultural neighbours. Here issues related to the warmth of the welcome by – and the social interaction of refugees with – neighbours is a critical element. As Figure 6.2.6 shows, the overwhelming majority of the newly-arrived refugees have a warm welcome from their neighbours. NSW respondents reported the highest level of friendliness (92.3%), followed closely by Qld (90.3%). These settlement outcomes compare favourably to those found in the BNLA where 87.3% of refugees felt that the people in their neighbourhood were friendly. In contrast only two in three of Victorian informants reported friendly neighbours, though it should be noted that the number of informants who participated in the fieldwork in Victoria (51) was much lower than in either NSW (246 informants) or Qld (165 informants).

Figure 6.2.6: Adults in all states: are the people in your neighbourhood friendly?

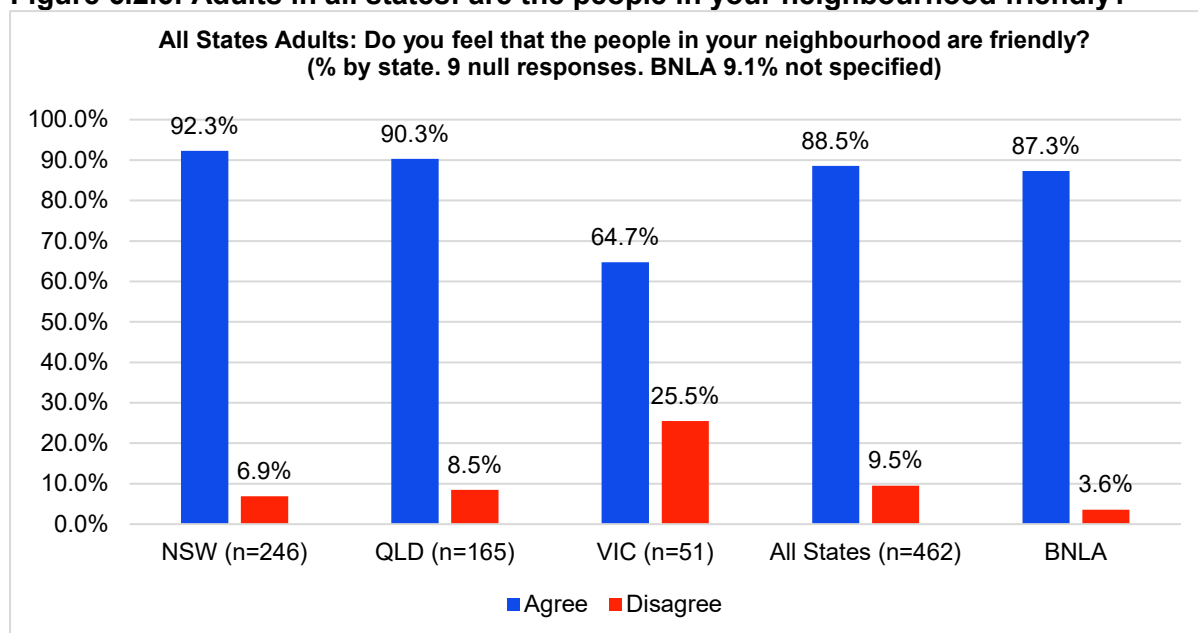
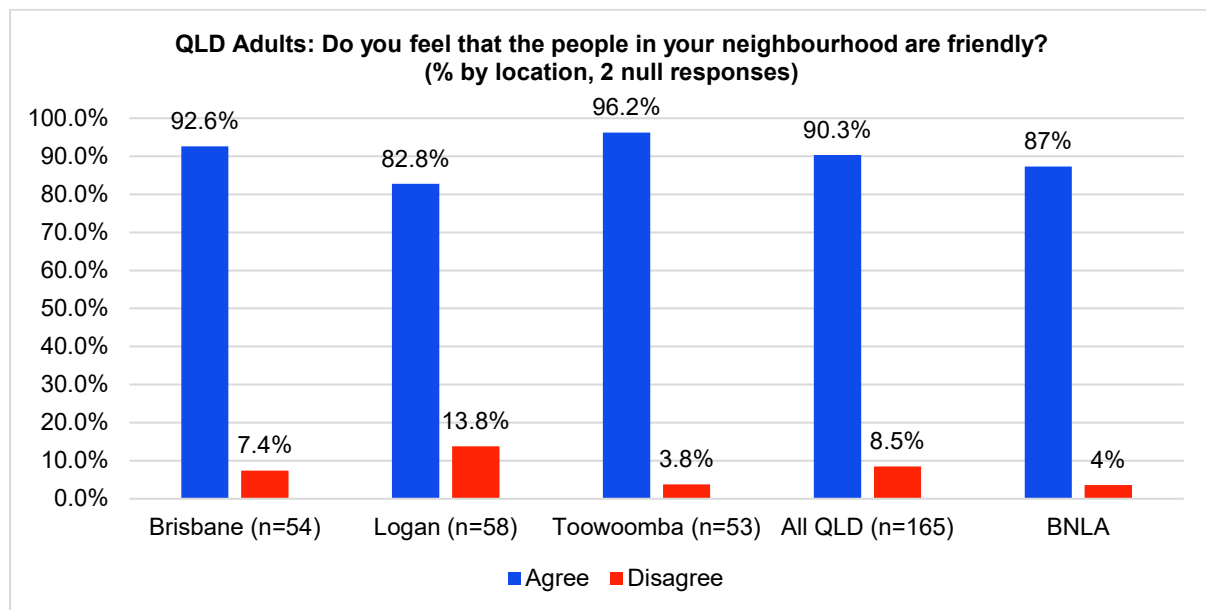
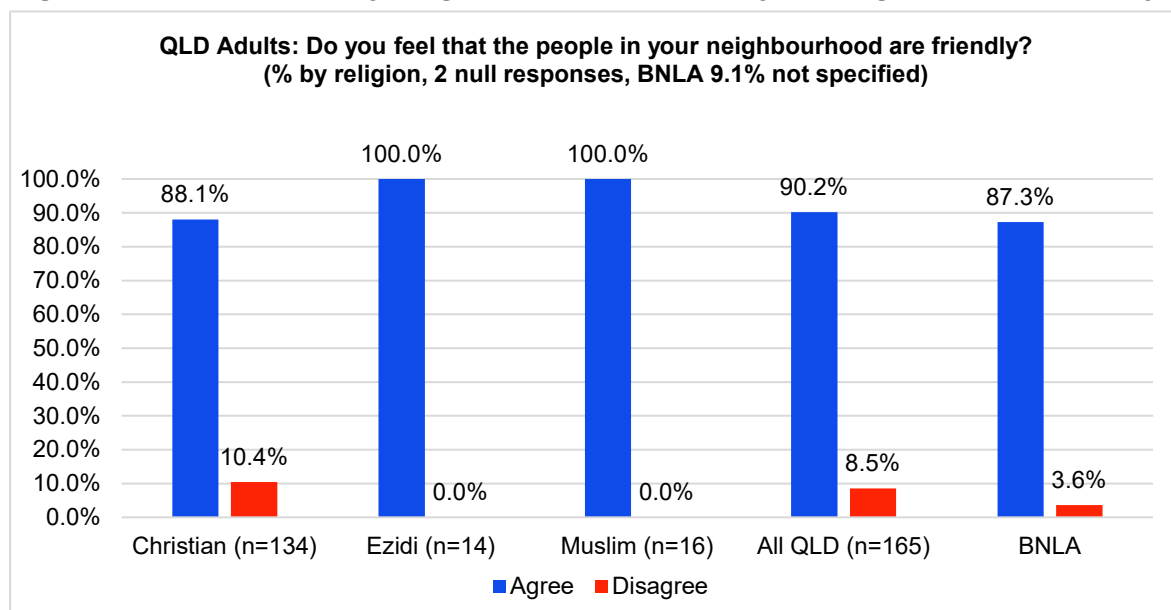


Figure 6.2.7: Qld adults, by location: are the people in your neighbourhood friendly?

Within Qld, more Toowoomba respondents felt that their neighbours were friendly (see Figure 6.2.7). Logan had the least number of respondents who thought that their neighbours were friendly. Moreover, the strength of the friendliness of neighbours to refugees did not vary significantly by the religion of the refugees themselves (Figure 6.2.8). **Given that the refugee issue has been so controversial in Australian politics for the past two decades this is a remarkable finding that speaks to the openness of the Australian people to refugees from the Middle East. Moreover, the strength of the welcome to refugees in Toowoomba puts to rest the notion that the Australian bush is red neck and racist to people from minority linguistic, cultural and religious backgrounds. It is a strong finding about the way that people in Queensland and other parts of Australia can transcend political differences in their daily lives.**

Figure 6.2.8: Qld adults, by religion: are the people in your neighbourhood friendly?

The overall motivation of most of our refugee informants to come to Australia was driven by the need to secure a better future for their children. Many of the adults conceded that while they themselves might have difficulties with language or employment they were confident that their children would have a good life in Australia.

84.2% of respondents in Queensland reported that the state is a good place to bring up children; this was similar to the NSW result and only slightly behind the BNLA national result (see Figure 6.2.9). The key point to be noted here is that most of the BNLA refugees surveyed had been in Australia for several years compared to about one year for the refugee informants in this study. The lower results for Victorian informants might be a function of the smaller sample interviewed in that state. Over time, we can expect these results to be even stronger as our informants' children have more experience of schooling and life in Australia.

In Qld, almost 90 per cent of refugee adults living in Brisbane and Toowoomba thought that their neighbourhood was a good place to bring up their children, a remarkable result. In Logan eight out of every ten refugee adults interviewed saw it as a good neighbourhood in which to raise children, which is also a strong result (see Figure 6.2.10).

Figure 6.2.9: Adults in all states: is your neighbourhood a good place to bring up your children?

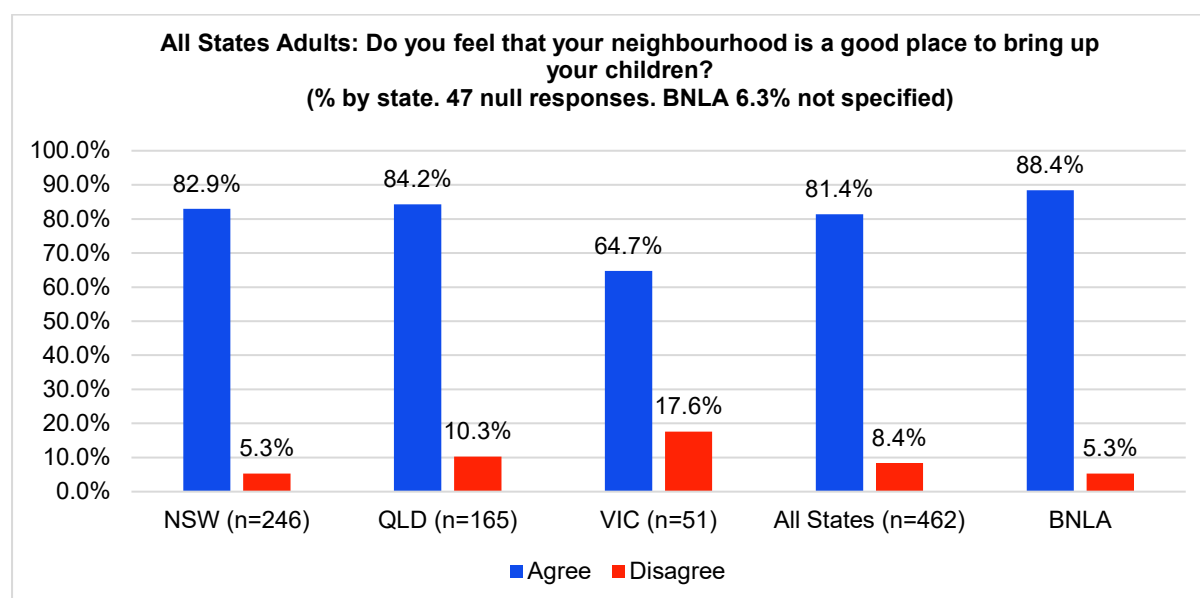
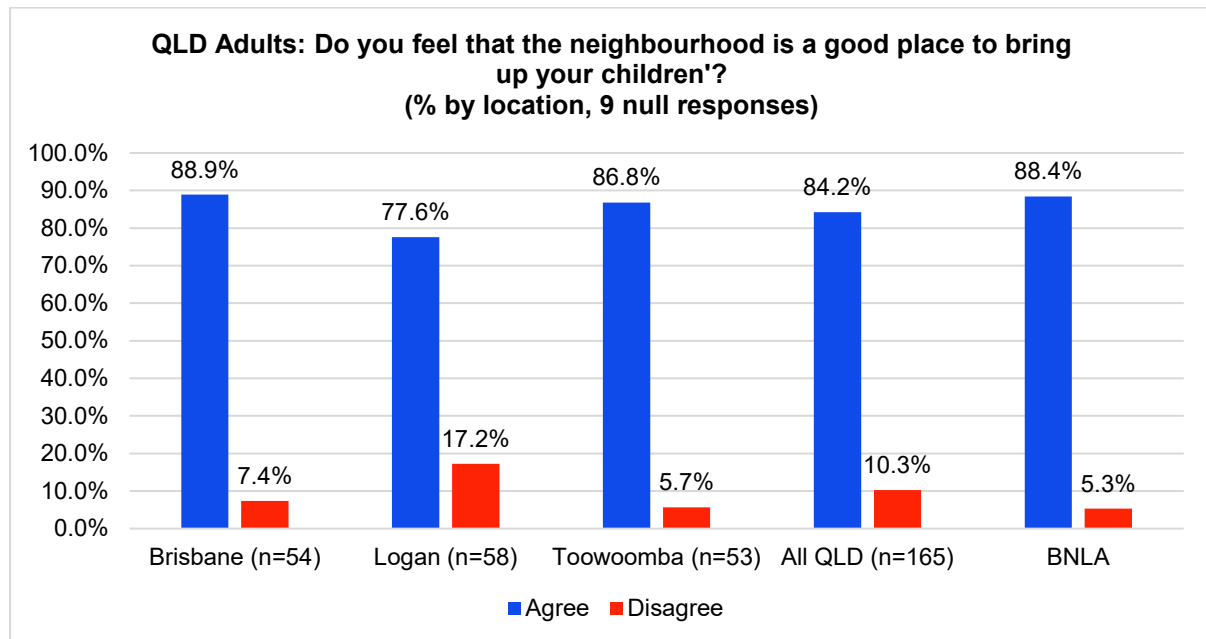
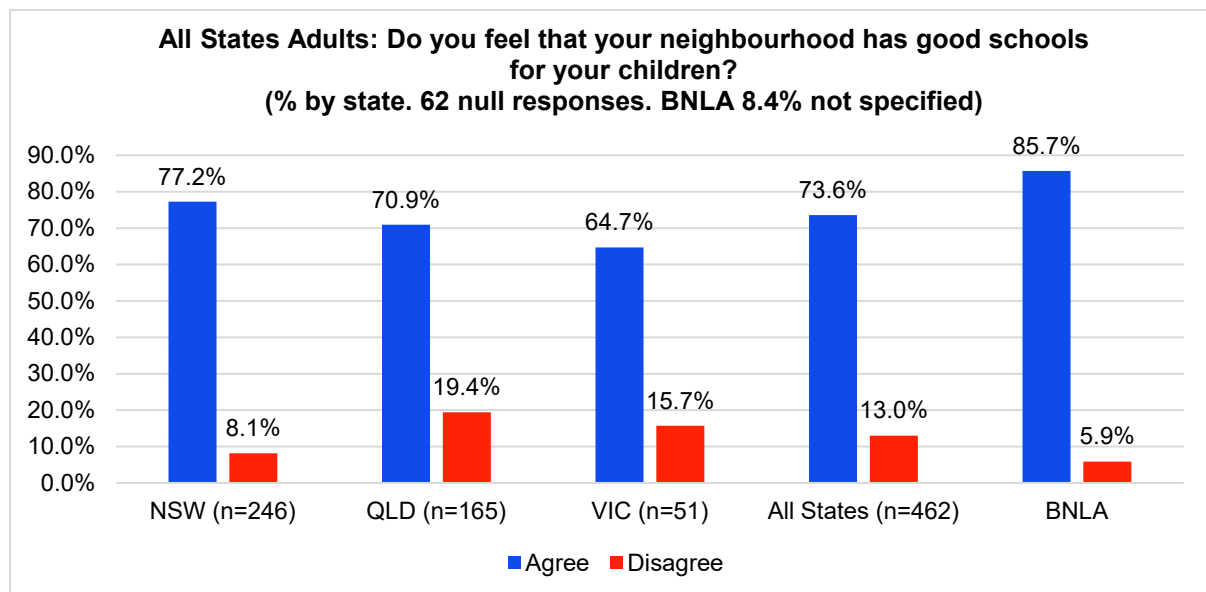


Figure 6.2.10: Qld adults: is your neighbourhood a good place to bring up your children?



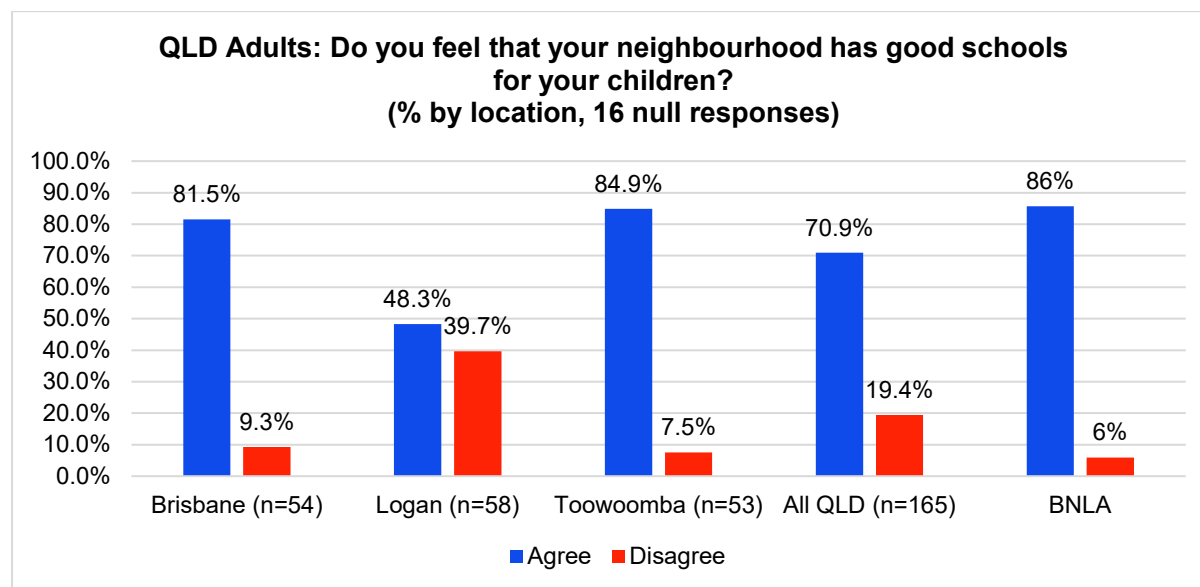
Education is of course critical to the prospects of refugee children in Australia. Seven in ten (70.9%) of refugee parents surveyed in Queensland felt their neighbourhood had good schools. This was lower than those refugees surveyed in NSW (77.2%) and lower than the national BNLA results (85.7%), while Victoria was again the outlier with only two in three respondents thinking that their neighbourhood schools were good for their children's future (see Figure 6.2.11).

Figure 6.2.11: Adults in all states: does your neighbourhood have good schools?



Within Queensland, around eight out of ten refugee parents living in Brisbane and Toowoomba were very happy with their local schools, a very strong result. Logan respondents were not so convinced about the local schooling opportunities for their children with only slightly less than half (48.3%) of the refugee parents surveyed being happy with their local schools (see Figure 6.2.12).

Figure 6.2.12: Qld adults: does your neighbourhood have good schools?



Another aspect relevant to assessing the way that a local neighbourhood provides for children in the area is related to the provision of parks and playgrounds where children can play and conduct sporting and other outdoor social activities with family and friends. As Figure 6.2.13 shows, Qld parents overwhelmingly – around eight out of ten – reported that their local area did have these facilities.

Figure 6.2.13: Adults in all states: does your neighbourhood have parks or playgrounds?

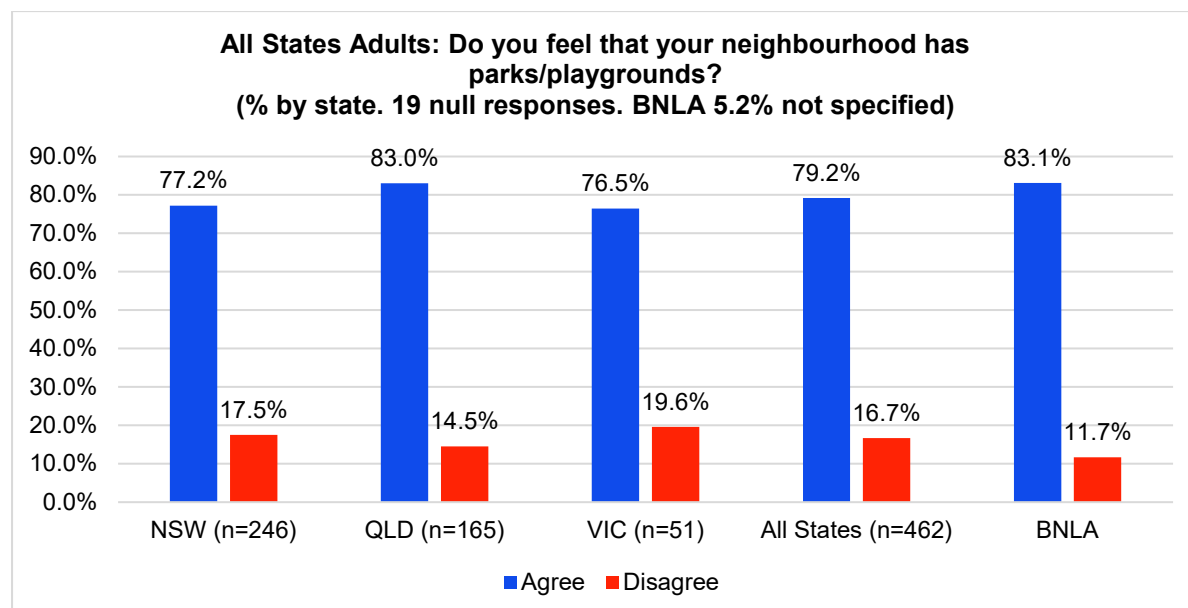
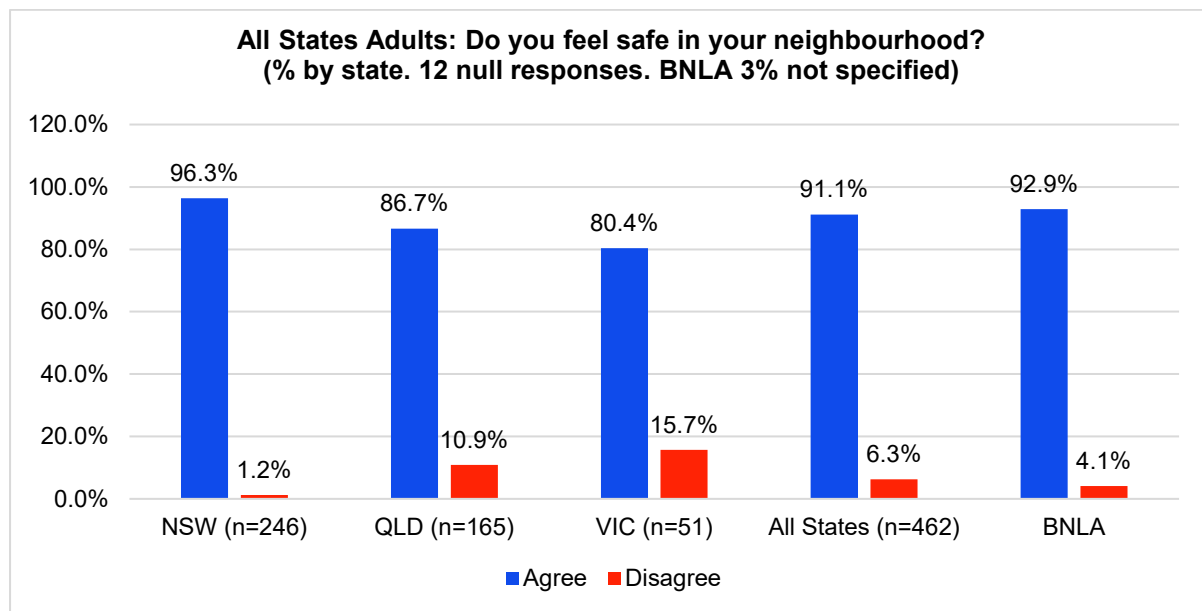


Figure 6.2.14: Adults in all states: do you feel safe in your neighbourhood?

The corollary of the argument that refugees wanted to flee from their war-torn, conflict-ridden homeland to provide a better future for their children is that they wanted to find a safe place for them to grow up. The individual stories of displacement of our informants were very traumatic and we did not dwell on these matters during our family interviews. Nevertheless, the fear that these refugee families felt and the horror that most experienced – bombings of their neighbourhoods, destruction of their houses, persecution of their families – meant that finding a safe place to live was their key priority. While many refugee families knew little about Australia when they decided to come here, they did know that it would be a safe haven where they would be freed from the persecution and fear of daily life that they experienced in their homeland. They were right. As Figure 6.2.14 shows, the overwhelming majority of refugee informants (86.7%) felt safe living in Queensland. While this was slightly lower than respondents in NSW (96.3%), and respondents to the national BNLA survey (92.9%), it is still a very strong result.

Within Qld, it is remarkable that all the refugees living in Toowoomba felt safe living there, as did nearly all of those living in Brisbane (96.3%). Logan was not considered as safe as other locations (see Figure 6.2.15) but even in Logan two in three respondents (65.5%) felt safe in the area. **Moreover, religious minorities felt very safe living in Queensland.** As Figure 6.2.16 shows, all of the Ezidi and Muslim refugees living in Queensland felt safe, with a minority of Christians (13.4%) the only adult respondents who did not feel safe in their neighbourhoods.

Figure 6.2.15: Qld adults, by location: do you feel safe in your neighbourhood?

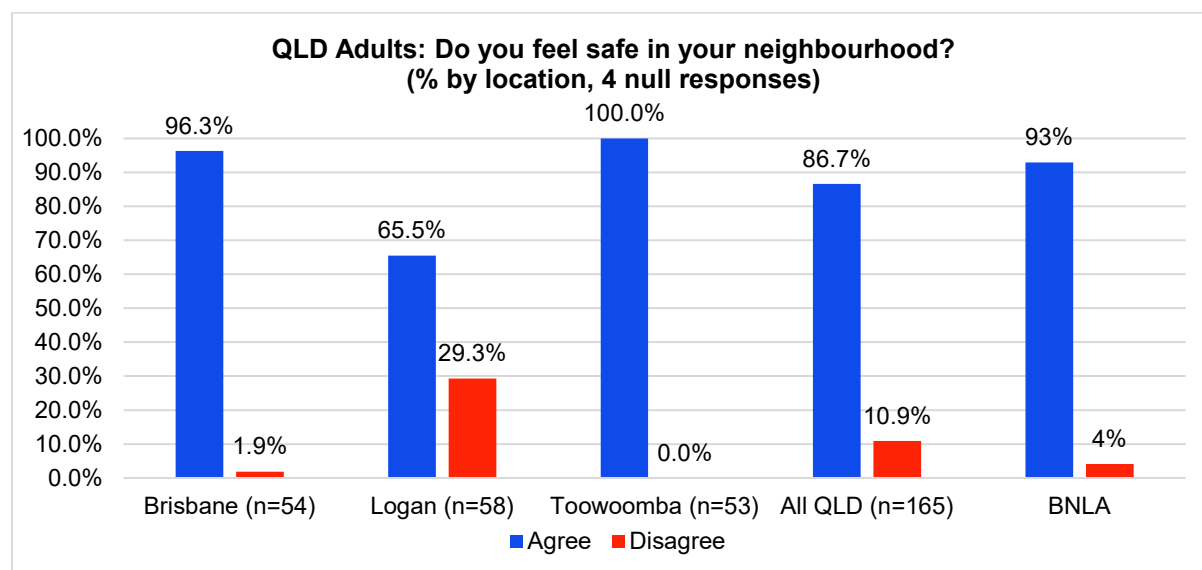
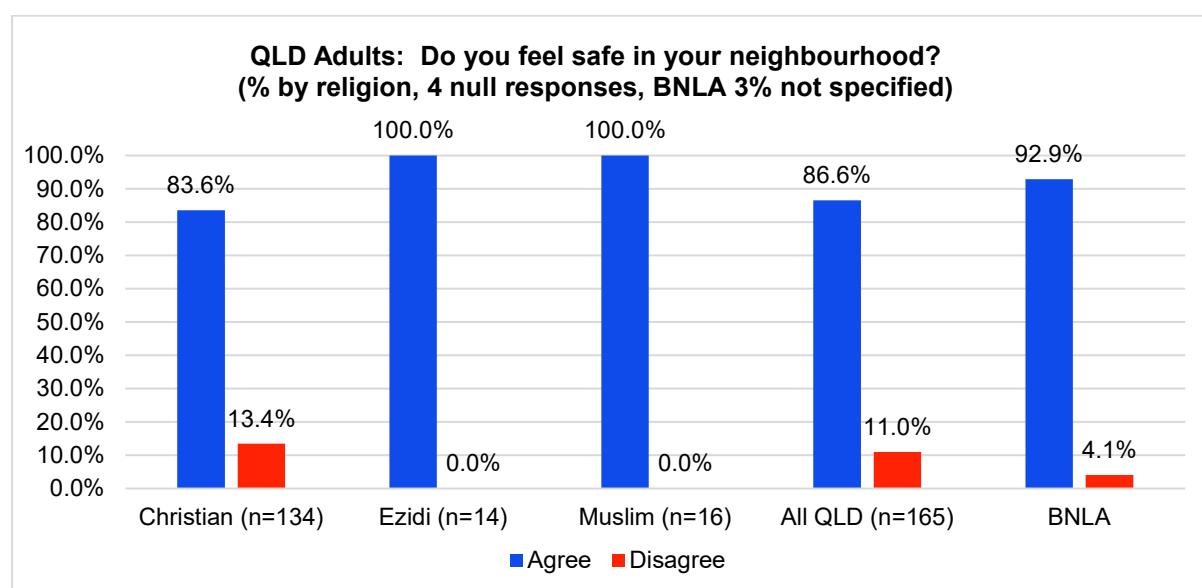


Figure 6.2.16: Qld adults, by religion: do you feel safe in your neighbourhood?



These quotes from informants living in Toowoomba highlight their perceptions of safety in their community:

It is very safe and comfortable living here as a refugee. We have never been called Afghan or said something for being different.

(Female, Harristown, 2018)

Yes, it is safe. You know as much as we – if you have any experience or knowledge about it feeling unsafe – if you dealing, even if someone who have used to – after that you will feel – just the language you will feeling unsafe. It's difficult. I guess the problem is how we can feeling safe after all this traumatic stress we have.

(Male, Newtown, 2018)

There's been a few times that people call bad words while driving. Yeah, driving past. We didn't realise what they said, but learnt it was not nice. It is not important for us, but at the places where we're going to study and meet people, it has not happened.

(Female, Kearneys Spring, 2018)

Refugee informants living in Logan were less likely to feel safe in their local area than those living in Toowoomba or Brisbane. As two refugee informants put it:

I'm not comfortable with this life here. When he doesn't feel safe due to drugs in the neighbourhood.

(Young male, Logan, 2018)

I'm not feeling very safe. Every now and then I hear things, sounds outside.'

(Young person, Marsden, 2018)

Many of the Logan refugee families lived in large housing complexes, often with a gated entry. Often other refugee families also lived in these premises. The security that the gated housing facility gave to its residents is indicated in this quote from a young refugee living in Loganlea, part of Logan:

Here I feel safe but like my mum said, after 5 o'clock in Syria we used to go out and walk but now no, but we stay in the complex because it's safe. There's a gate and cameras and with my friends with other houses it's safe in the complex but outside, no.'

(Young person, Loganlea, 2018)

A key indicator or measure of refugee integration into a society is the extent to which they are able to make new friends, a key aspect of social inclusion. Of the Qld locations, Logan was the area where respondents felt they had the most difficulty making friends (see Figure 6.2.17); nevertheless in Logan four out of every ten (39.7%) refugee informants found it easy to make friends.

Another aspect of social inclusion and successful settlement relates to whether new refugee arrivals had social relations/interactions with their neighbours. Overall 43.0% of our Queensland refugee informants reported that it was easy to talk to their neighbours, a similar outcome to the national BNLA study (48.5%) even though the Queensland refugees had lived next to their neighbours for less than a year while in the BNLA respondents lived next to their neighbours for several years. Logan respondents also had the most difficulty talking to their new neighbours, with only one in four (25.9%) refugee informants reporting that it was easy to talk to their neighbours (see Figure 6.2.18).

Figure 6.2.17: Qld adults: how easy is it to make friends?

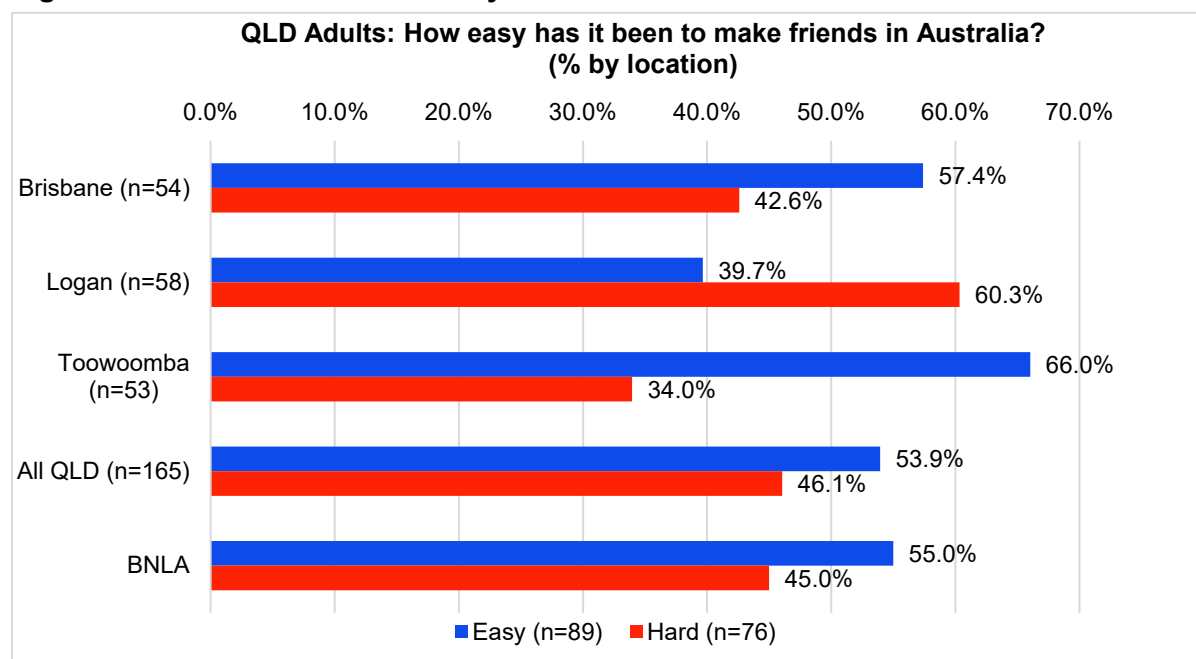
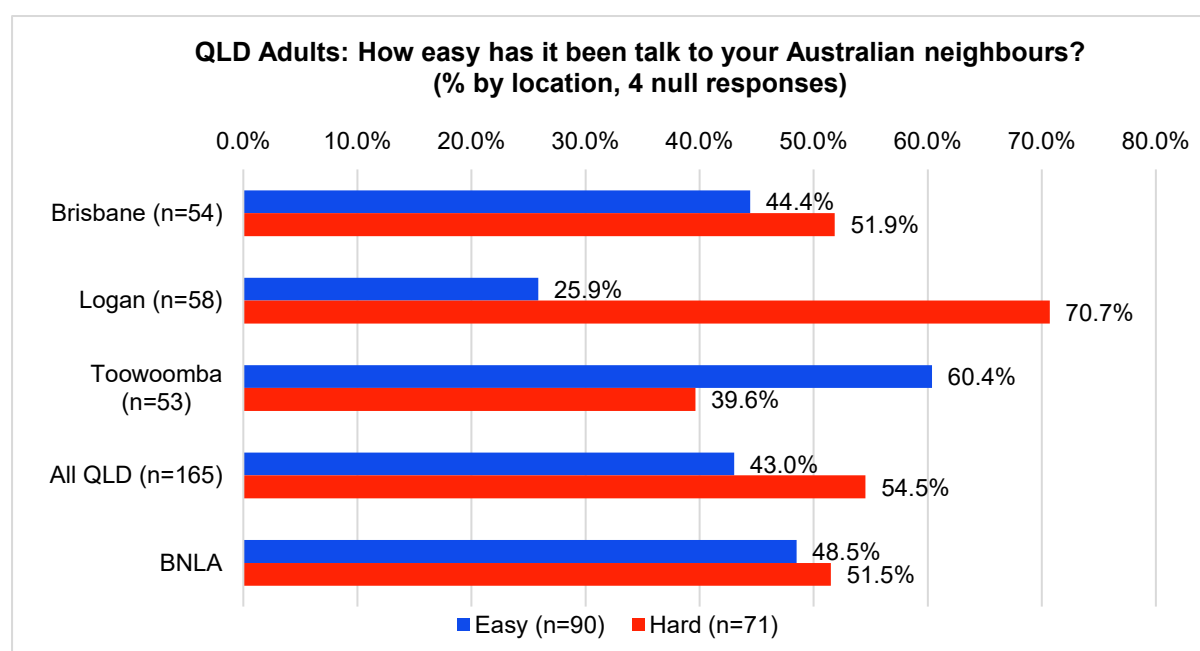
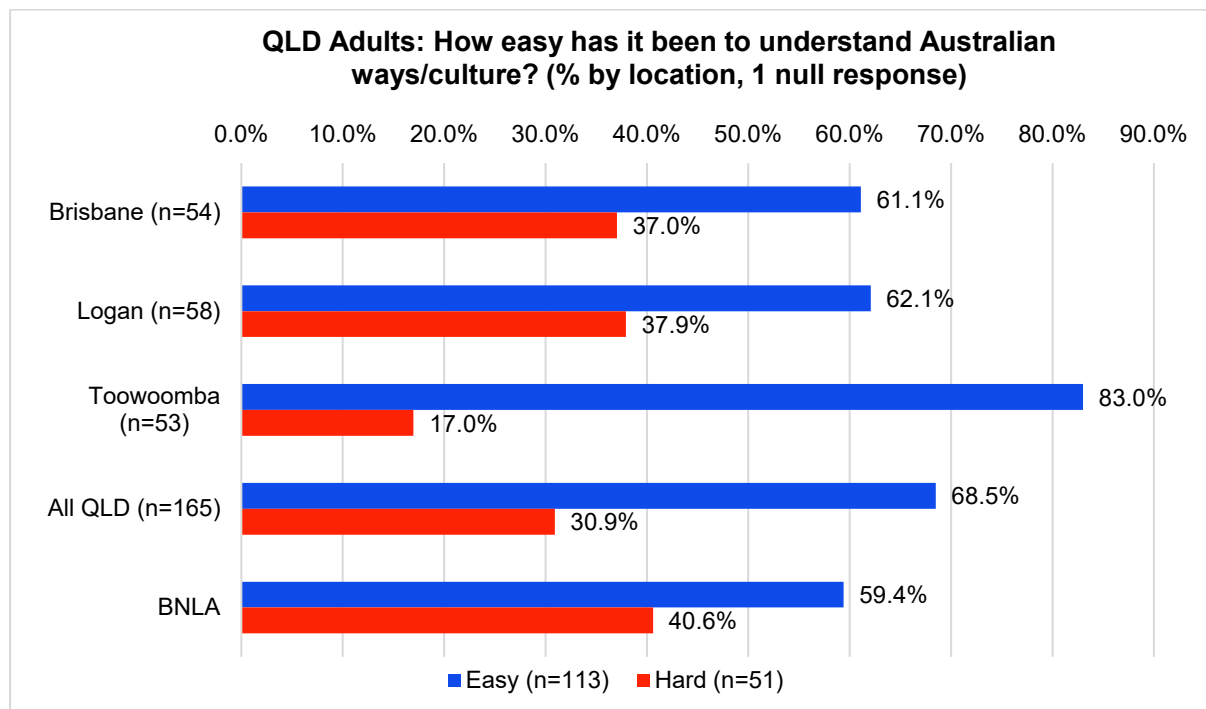


Figure 6.2.18: Qld adults: how easy is it to talk to your Australian neighbours?



Like any country, Australia has its cultural idiosyncrasies that newcomers find different and sometimes difficult to understand and to adjust to. This is often seen in colloquial language and expressions as well as other cultural mores. In the national BNLA, six out of ten refugees (59.4%) found it easy to understand Australian ways and culture. The newly-arrived refugees in Queensland did much better: 68.5% found it easy to understand Australian ways and culture. Post arrival adjustment therefore occurred in a much shorter period of settlement. Toowoomba was the area where respondents had the most success understanding Australian ways and culture with 83.0% finding it easy to understand Australian ways and culture (see Figure 6.2.19).

Figure 6.2.19: Qld adults: how easy is it to understand Australian ways?



A personal aspect of successful refugee settlement relates to the level of happiness of the individual refugees. In response to the question: 'How happy are you with your current life?', 38.2% of refugee informants in Queensland reported that they were 'very happy' and another 22.4% 'mostly happy' see Figure 6.2.20). **This is a remarkable outcome given the recent trauma that these refugee families had experienced.** Most of the refugees still had family in the home country who they contacted regularly – often daily. Their key priority is to get these family members out to Australia, but most find that it has not been possible to do so. Most come from fractured families: they have siblings in other countries – Germany, Canada, the US, Sweden, and others – who are also refugees and long to be reunited as a family unit. In addition, most families have lost family members through bombings and conflict.

Most of the refugee families that we interviewed were very happy living in Australia and very thankful for the Australian government and Australian people giving them the opportunity for a new life in Australia. But at the same time, these families – particularly the adults – missed

their old pre-war and pre-conflict life considerably. Most told us of the great life that they had had, with a very active nightlife where families would go out to visit other families late at night. This was a great contrast to settling in Queensland, where after work most families are tied to their houses. As one informant from Marsden in Logan put it:

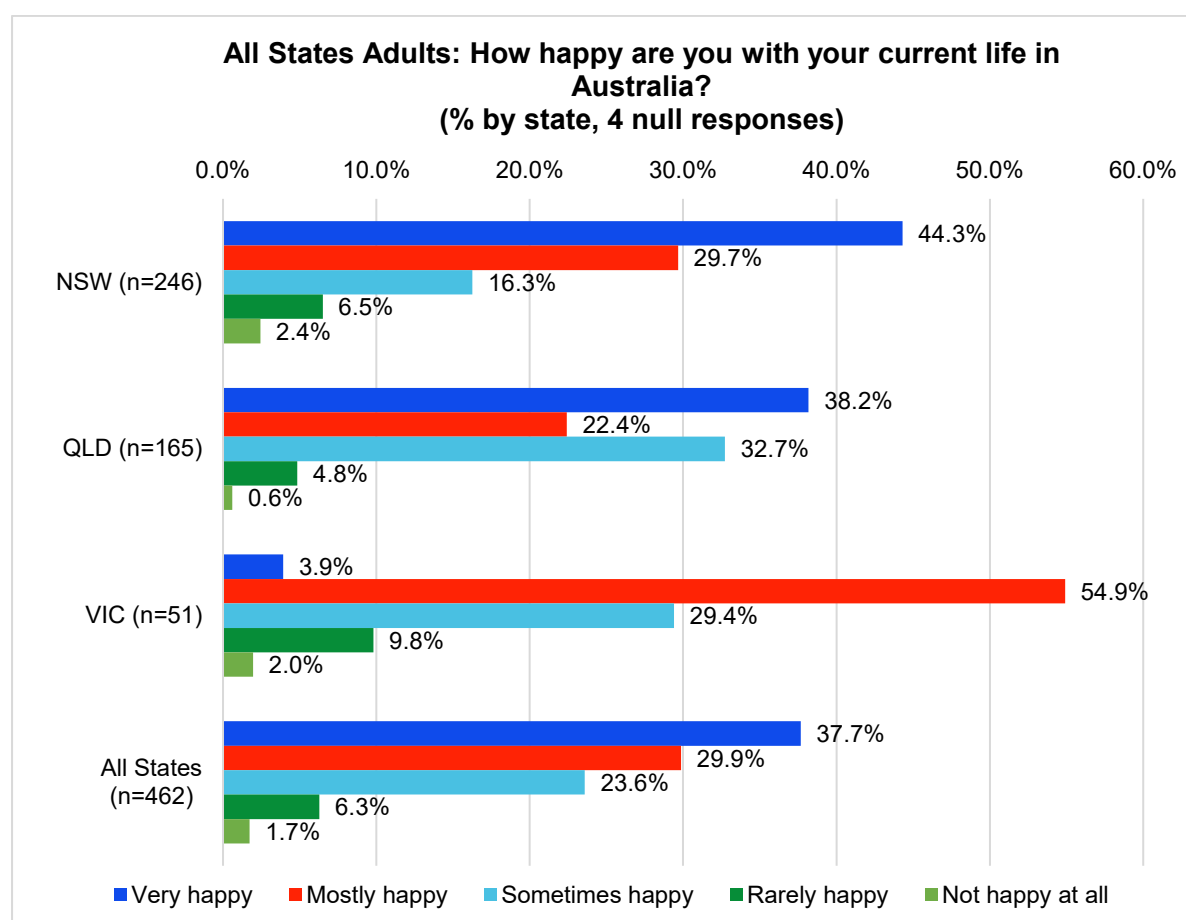
Also there is another factor, which is the social life. In Syria, we are very social people, so we used to have a lot of friends, a lot of families, and we have a lot of emotions to our family which stayed in Syria. So we feel that if we were together again, our families, maybe they would come here, and that would make us feel more settled.

(Male, Marsden, 2018)

In this context, the finding that six out of ten newly-arrived refugees are happy or very happy living in Queensland is strong evidence of successful settlement outcomes.

Of the three states, NSW appeared to have the highest level of happiness, with three in four respondents (74.0%) reporting that they were 'happy' or 'very happy' with their current lives, as did six out of ten refugees (58.8%) living in Victoria (see Figure 6.2.20).

Figure 6.2.20: Adults in all states: how happy are you with your current life?



Within Qld, Christian adult respondents reported being the least happy with their current life in Australia (see Figure 6.2.21); and Afghan adult respondents reported a higher level of happiness with their current life in Australia than others (see Figure 6.2.22).

Figure 6.2.21: Qld adults, by religion: how happy are you with your current life?

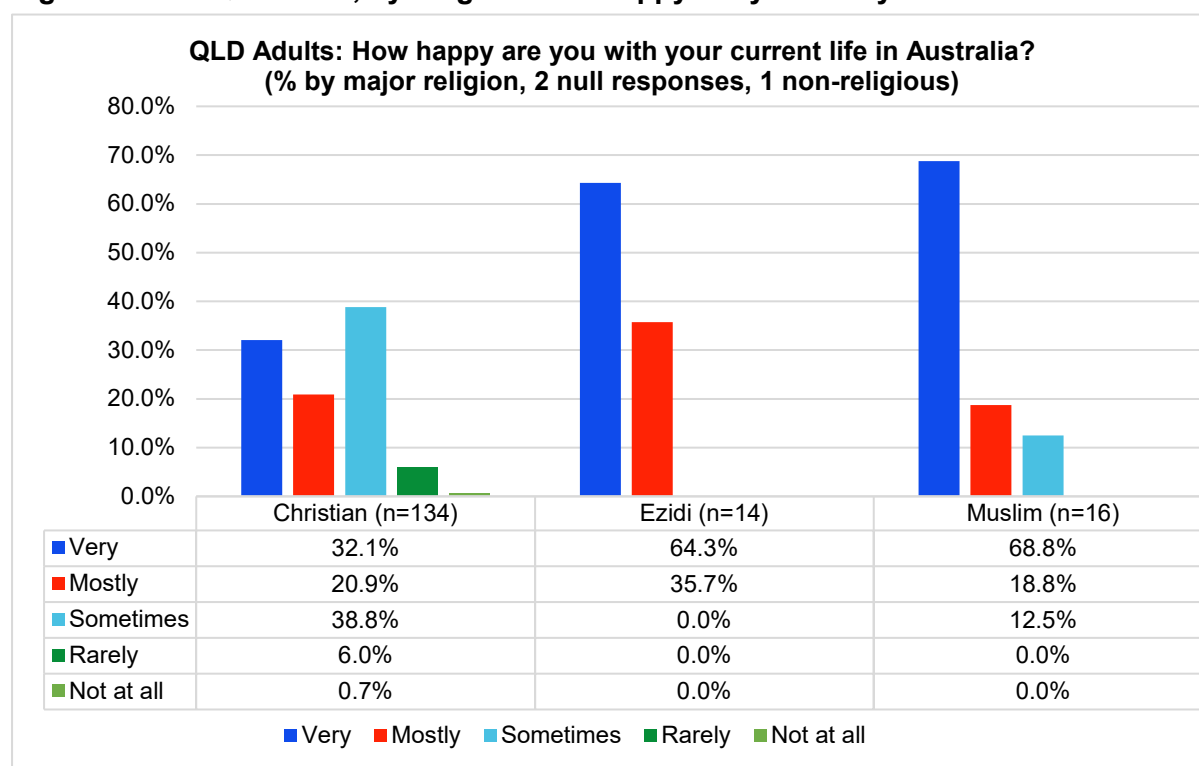


Figure 6.2.22: Qld adults, by emigration country: how happy are you with your current life?

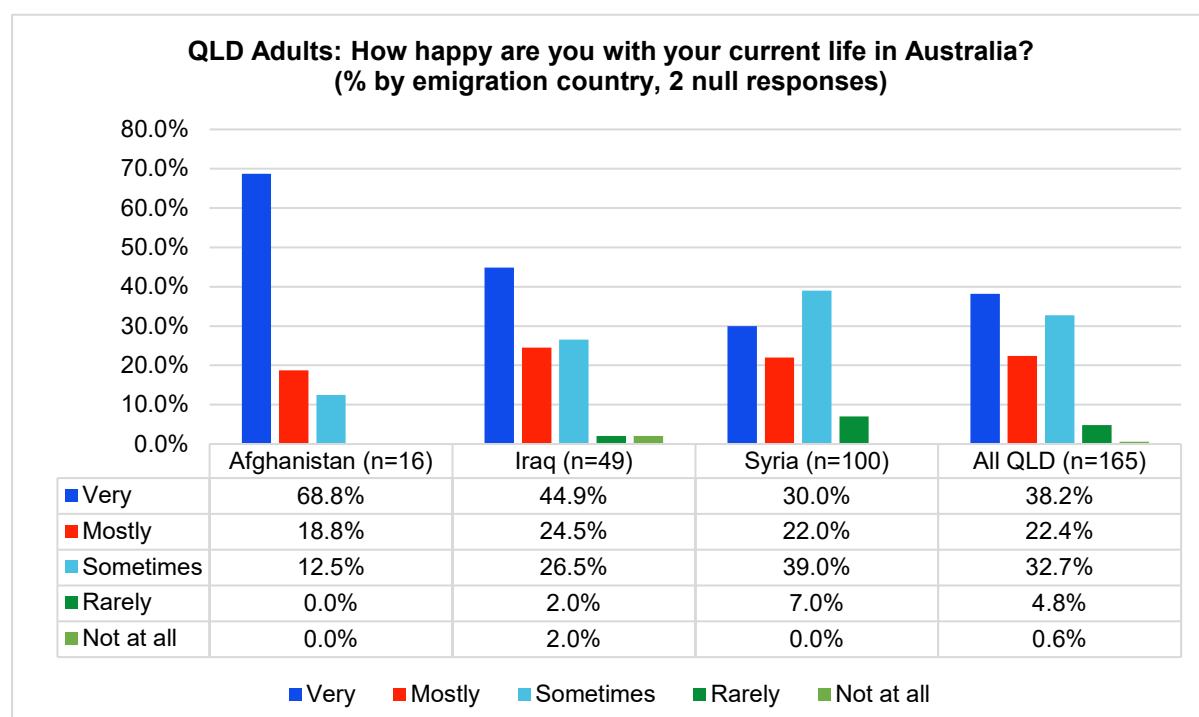
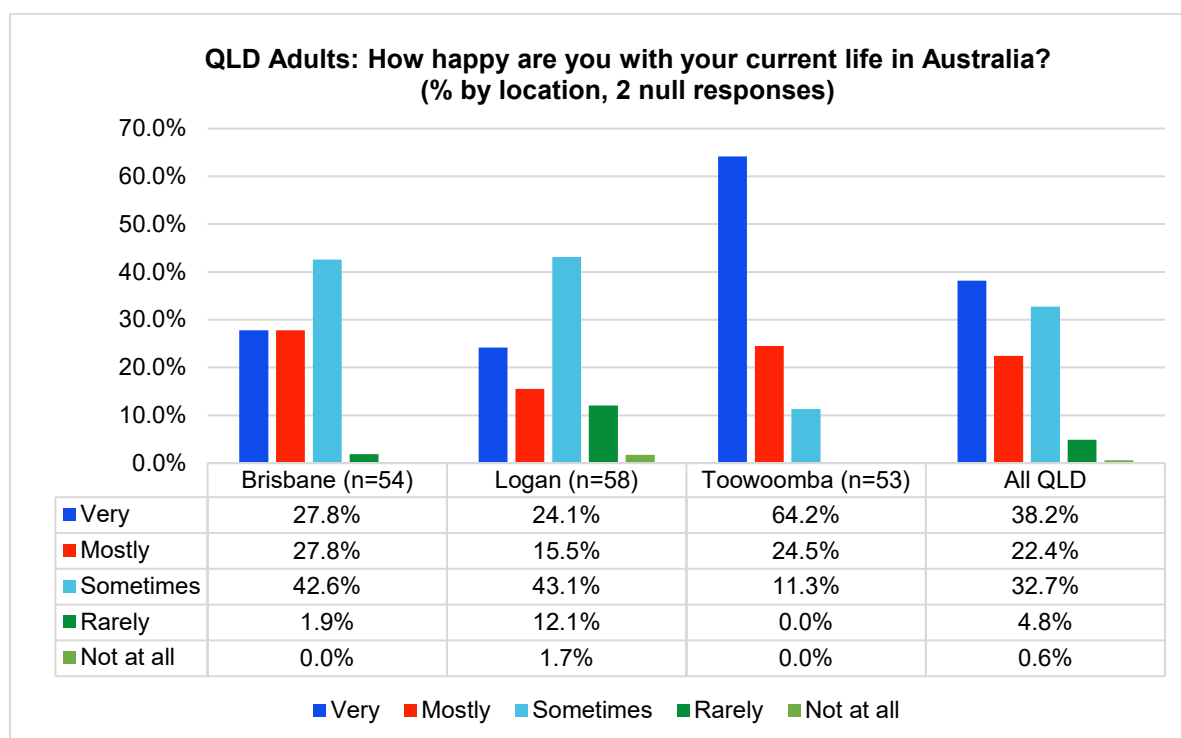


Figure 6.2.23: Qld adults, by location: how happy are you with your current life?

Two in three respondents in Toowoomba reported that they were 'very happy' (see Figure 6.2.23), and although the proportion for Logan was somewhat lower, almost 40% of the Logan adult respondents were 'very happy' or 'mostly happy' with their lives now. These Logan adults felt optimism, but this was mixed with resignation and caution, as these quotations show:

You are born again. [about arriving in Australia]

(Female, Marsden, 2018)

When I arrived, I felt nervous and a little sad, but now I am very happy because the children here in Australia are safe and a very good education.

(Female, Loganlea, 2018)

The future starts here, how will we get to go back?

(Male, Loganlea, 2018)

When I look at my children, happy, when memories, then sad.

(Female, Loganlea, 2018)

Feeling that there are some difficult things coming on the road still.

(Male, Loganlea, 2018)

Everything different. The sun is different. The day is longer than the night, especially in the summer.

(Female, Loganlea, 2018)

Overall Settlement Experiences

As pointed out throughout the report, the evidence presented in this section echoes the findings of positive settlement outcomes in Queensland. **All the informants had nothing but great praise about the reception that they received on arrival in Australia by the service providers MDA and Access.** They were met by staff from MDA or Access who found them a place to live, directed them to welfare services, introduced them to TAFE and English-language education, got them organised with welfare benefits and health cards, and introduced them to all the aspects of daily life that they would experience in Queensland – such as navigating transport and introducing them to the local school and the local area. **This is strong evidence-based research to support the proposition that Australia has world-class organisations who provide services to newly-arrived refugees.**

Several key settlement issues emerged from this research. The Syrian-conflict intake selected mainly Christian refugees from Syria and Iraq with – in the main – impressive education and employment histories and achievements. Many Syrians were professionals. Finding a job in Australia – particularly one where they can use their education and experience – is the most obvious challenge. Most want to get their English language fluency up to speed first. This is the challenge of *refugee economic inclusion* in Queensland and other parts of Australia.

However, when it comes to issues of *social inclusion* of refugee families the evidence presented in this section is very strong: most refugees feel safe living in Queensland, they already speak to their neighbours; many have made friends and feel that Queenslanders are friendly to them.

We asked our refugee informants about experiences of racism in Australia. Perhaps surprisingly – given the dog whistle politics about refugees that has dominated political and public discourses in Australia, particularly over the last two decades – most said that they had not experienced racism in Queensland. A few informants recounted an incident in public that they felt was racist. As one informant from Logan put it:

I want to belong, but some people do not accept me because they think I'm a refugee and a terrorist.

((Young person, Loganlea, 2018)

Most refugee informants felt that Australia offered a great future for their children: they were, in the main, very happy about their local schools, and the local neighbourhood was a safe place for their children. As one informant from Toowoomba put it:

Yes [I am optimistic for ourselves and for our children, our future in Australia]. It is something obscure. We don't know how to – but we let them by themselves. They have a good language before they came here because we have – they are studying in school teaching them all the subjects in English, and they have used to English. They haven't any problems with language. They are good in their school. They will find their pathways here by themselves.
(Male, Newtown, 2018)

Most of the refugees felt happy with their lives in Australia and positive about their future. **All of those interviewed stated that they wanted to take up Australian citizenship as soon as possible:**

Many things, actually. But first things, to get Australian citizenship, because it mean for us so much, because this country help us to be safe life, and we want to finish our [unclear] and get good job, because we don't like to get money from the government.
(Male, Toowoomba, 2018)

6.3 Stories from young refugees

What makes this study significant is the inclusion of the whole family unit, including young people between the ages of 5-18 years. Often the mobility of families is driven by the desire for a better future for children and this was a common discussion point in our family interviews. One mother said: *'My life ended when I left Iraq. There is no future for me. This is for my children'*.

In social research, young people are now considered to be research participants with their own voice, opinions and ways of seeing the world (Cahill, 2007). Given the family focus of this study their inclusion is critical to understanding family settlement.

As Figure 6.3.1 reveals, 59 young people were interviewed and surveyed, with theirs and their parents' permission; those over 16 gave permission themselves.

Figure 6.3.1: Emigration country of Qld young people

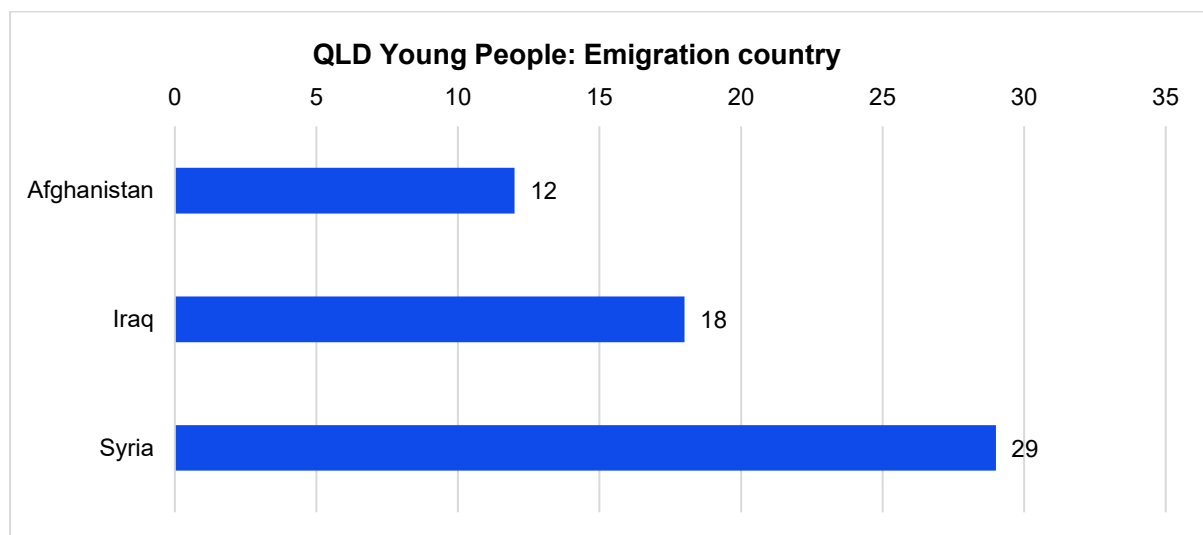
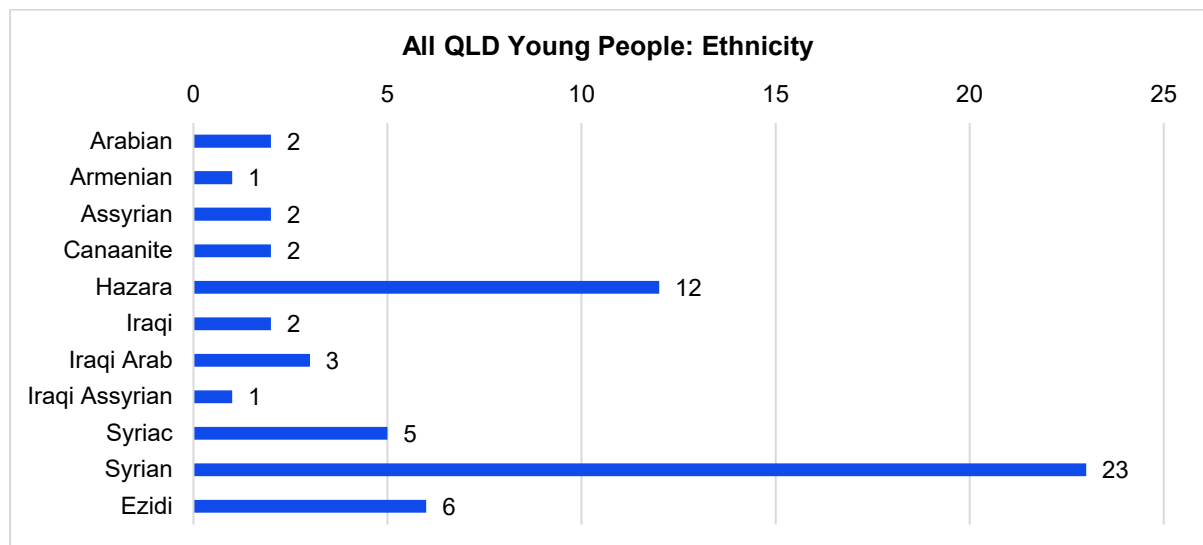


Figure 6.3.2: Ethnicity of Qld young people



The largest ethnic group we spoke with among young people were those who identify as Syrian (see Figure 6.3.2). All Afghans identify as Hazara; the largest numbers of Ezidi are from Iraq (see Table 6.3.1) although they also come from Syria and Turkey.

Table 6.3.1: Qld Young People: Ethnicity by emigration country.

Qld Young People: Ethnicity by emigration country				
	Afghanistan (n=12)	Iraq (n=18)	Syria (n=29)	Totals
Arabian	0	0	2	2
Armenian	0	0	1	1
Assyrian	0	2	0	2
Canaanite	0	0	2	2
Ezidi	0	6	0	6
Hazara	12	0	0	12
Iraqi	0	0	2	2
Iraqi Arab	0	3	0	3
Iraqi Assyrian	0	1	0	1
Syriac	0	4	1	5
Syrian	0	2	21	23
Totals	12	18	29	59

As Table 6.3.2 shows, the Ezidi and Hazara are mainly settled in Toowoomba, a consequence of settlement policies.

Table 6.3.2: Qld Young People: Ethnicity by location

Qld Young People: Ethnicity by location				
	Brisbane (n=9)	Logan (n=27)	Toowoomba (n=23)	Totals
Arabian	0	2	0	2
Armenian	1	0	0	1
Assyrian	0	2	0	2
Canaanite	0	2	0	2
Ezidi	0	0	6	6
Hazara	0	0	12	12
Iraqi	0	0	2	2
Iraqi Arab	0	3	0	3
Iraqi Assyrian	0	1	0	1
Syriac	3	2	0	5
Syrian	5	15	3	23
Totals	9	27	23	59

There was an even distribution of ages among young people, ranging from 5 years of age to 18 years. Syrians in the 15-18 years age bracket made up the largest group. Overall, there were only slightly more males than females (see Table 6.3.3).

Table 6.3.3: Qld Young People: age, location and gender

Qld Young People: age, location and gender												
	Brisbane (n=9)			Logan (n=27)			Toowoomba (n=23)			All Qld (n=59)		
	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
5-10	3	2	5	2	5	7	4	3	7	9	10	19
11-14	0	0	0	7	3	10	5	4	9	12	7	19
15-18	3	1	4	4	5	9	3	3	6	10	9	19
Over 18	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	2
Totals	6	3	9	14	13	27	12	11	23	32	27	59

6.3.1 Education

We asked the young people about their educational experiences, neighbourhood, friendship groups and hopes. Overall, most were settling in well, although this response was not marked evenly across genders and locations. Nobody disliked school. Everyone had found subjects that they liked and/or were good at, and most had found friends to be with at school. As Figure 6.3.3 reveals, no young person in Brisbane or Toowoomba was dissatisfied with their educational experiences, while one male and one female in Logan found them 'bad' and 'not good' respectively. It may be that finding friends is part of the problem, as this young person commented:

I don't have any friends. Kind of, like one friend. Maybe a half. I don't know if she's a real friend.

(Young female, age 12, Loganlea, 2018)

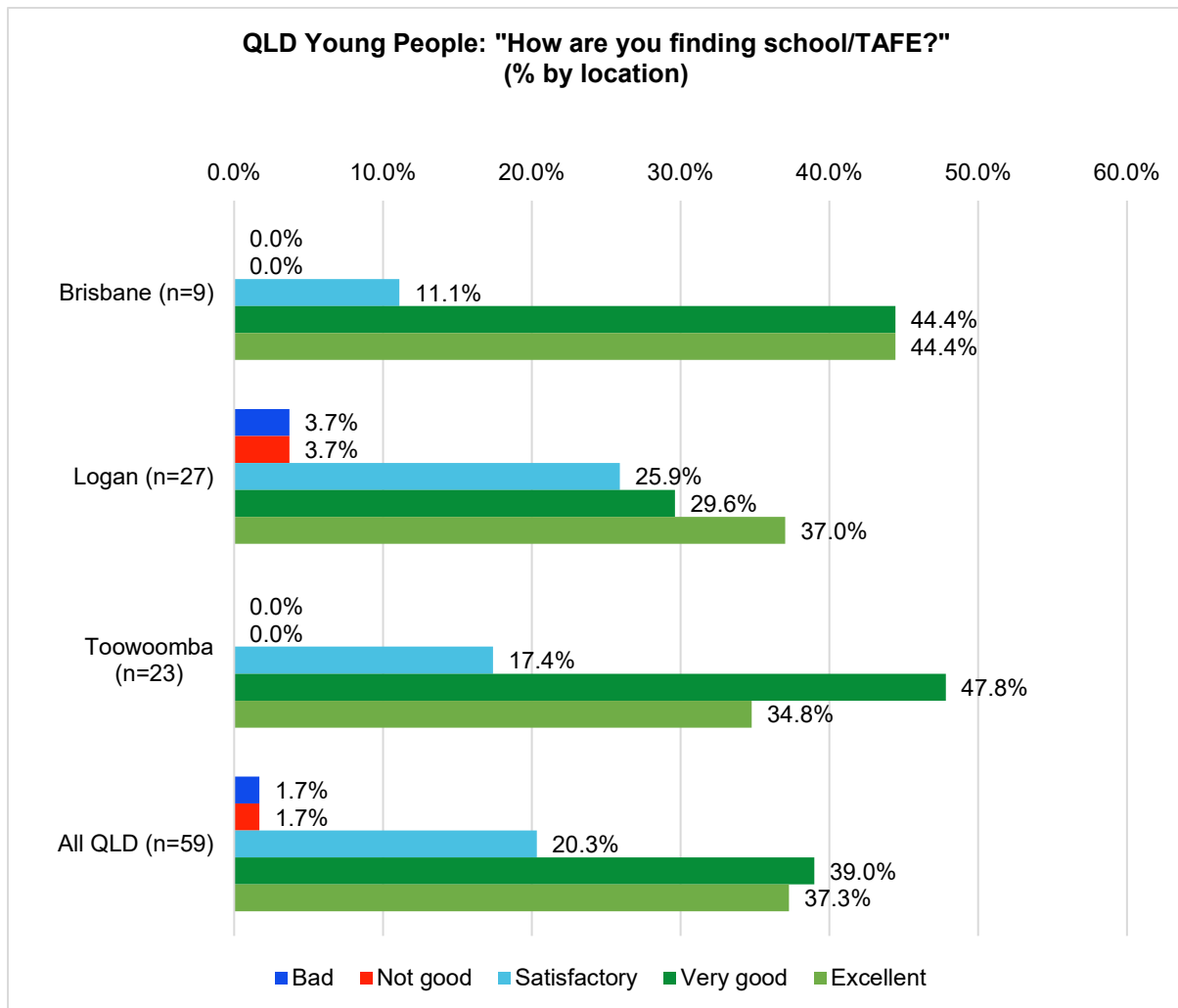
However, this was rare as most young people made positive comments such as the following:

Actually, there's nothing I don't like about school. I like everything about school. I don't have any complaints. Yes, I have a lot of friends that support me. Some of them are Aussies and some of them are Afghans and Africans. I have mixed friends.

(Young male, age 12, Darling Heights, 2018)

Yes, I have a group of friends there. Yes, it was hard at first to get to know people. It was very hard and I was thinking they don't like me or they run away from me. But at the end I understood that because someone came new to the country that's hard. I understand I just need time to feel myself like Australian people or Australian students and that's good. I need time because – I understand I need time because people they still don't know me and they don't have information about me. I need time and they need time to just figure out things about me. Yes, the language helped that.

(Young female, age 13, Mt.Lofty, 2018)

Figure 6.3.3: Qld young people and education

6.3.2 Settlement

Most young people in Qld reported feeling safe in their neighbourhood (see Figure 6.3.4); Logan was the only location where some did not feel safe (see Figure 6.3.5). One young male commented:

I'm not feeling very safe. Every now and then I hear things, sounds outside. 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].'
(Young male, age 13, Marsden, 2018)

It is interesting to note that while Afghan families are visibly different this did not lead to feelings of exclusion or feeling unsafe in Toowoomba; 100% of young Afghan people there felt safe.

Figure 6.3.4: Qld young people by emigration country: do you feel safe in your neighbourhood?

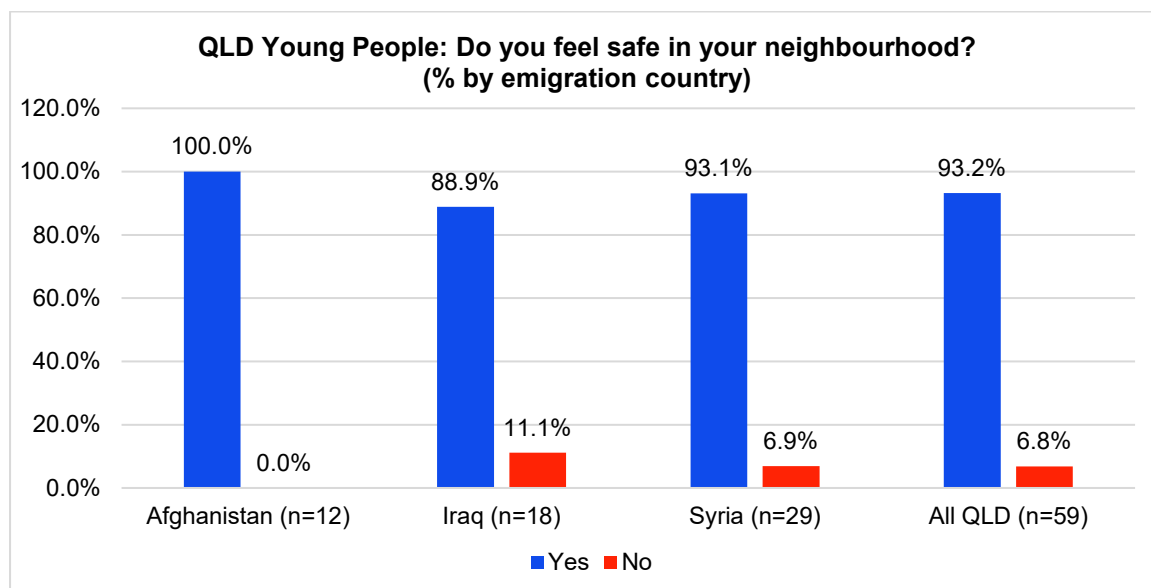
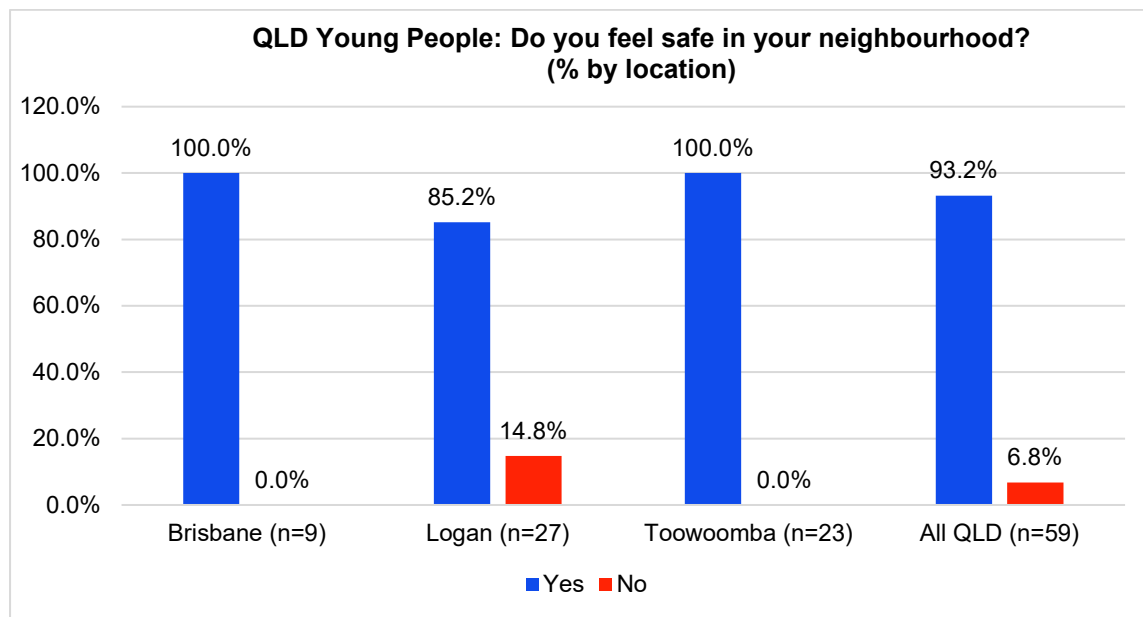


Figure 6.3.5: Qld young people by location: do you feel safe in your neighbourhood?

One young woman said that she regularly walked to sport and church and felt totally safe. She also mentioned how she came to feel she belonged:

So the good thing in my life that happened last year was [name omitted], the Pastor, came to our home and introduced us to church. Though we are not Christians we still go there. It's a youth group. So there we found many friends. We got to know more about other Afghans living in [the area we live in] and other cultures. It was like other people from different cultures, Sudani, Arabs...Multiculture. I love it.

(Young female, age 14, South Toowoomba, 2018)

Friendships are important to the process of belonging and settling to a new place. A significant number of young people reported having 2 to 5 friends from different backgrounds to themselves (see Table 6.3.4).

Table 6.3.4: Qld young people: how many of your friends are from different backgrounds to you?

Qld Young People: How many of your friends are from different backgrounds to you?								
	Brisbane (n=9)		Logan (n=27)		Toowoomba (n=23)		All Qld (n=59)	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
None	0	1	1	3	0	0	1	4
1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
2 to 5	3	1	3	7	3	4	9	12
5 or more	1	0	5	1	2	2	8	3
10 or more	1	1	5	2	7	5	13	8

When discussing friendships, they pointed to the diversity of networks, particularly in Toowoomba.

My friends are African, Arabic-speaking and 'Australian'.

(Young female, age 15, Darling Heights, 2018)

I have a lot of friends. We play together. They are from Australia and Pakistan – that's all. I am the only one from Afghanistan in my class.

(Young male, age 8, Darling Heights, 2018)

Most young people in Logan have many friends but they often speak Arabic as this young person explains:

A lot [of friends]. 20 or more. The same background. Yes, mostly Arabic speaking and some English friends. Yes, because it is mostly Arabic speaking people living here.

(Young male, age 15, Loganlea, 2018)

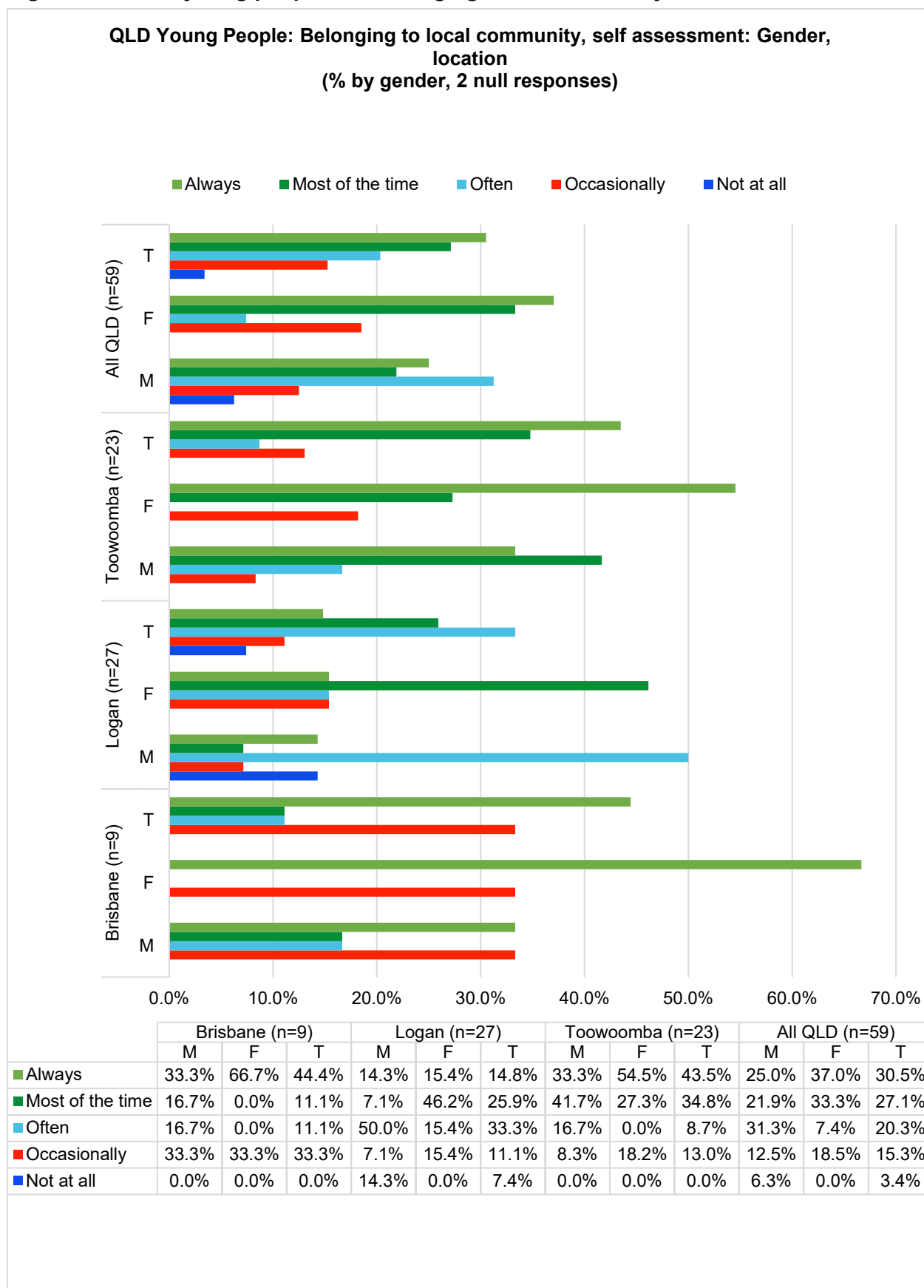
In terms of belonging, most of the Qld young people (57.6%) felt that they belonged to the local community 'most of the time' or 'always'; however, this was especially true for Toowoomba where 78.3% of the young people felt that way (see Figure 6.3.6). On the other hand, Brisbane had the highest proportion (33.3%) of those who only 'occasionally' felt that they belonged – these were equally males and females; while Logan was the only location where there were young people – all males – who felt that they did not belong at all (14.3%). Young people felt that belonging would take time, although some felt instantly attached. At times it was coming to understand 'Australianness' that was at the heart of feeling they belonged. The differences were at times stark:

It was hard, like a culture shock. Like in Pakistan we used to see people in hijab and here, whoa, it's different culture shock. Some do. But not everyone. And clothing, language, other traditions, eating. There we used to sit on the floor.

(Young female, age 14, South Toowoomba, 2018)

No, I don't feel I belong. Because I still love my country way more than this – in Australia.

(Young male, age 10, Fitzgibbon, 2018)

Figure 6.3.6: Qld young people and belonging to the community

For others it is a case of thinking about the future:

It was alright. I mean, I like it here. Well, it's a bit of both. Back in Syria, there's more family, there's more kind of social life than here. Here, I love it here just for the future and stuff.

(Young male, age 16, Runcorn, 2018)

I have lots of hopes for the future. It's difficult to decide because when I make up my mind I hear of something I haven't heard of before and wonder about that possibility. I learn by watching others. I want to be a good member of the community.

(Young female, age 15, Darling Heights, 2018)

That's a really tough question. My dreams changed. How should I say it? I hope to have a peaceful and safe future.

(Young female, age 16, South Toowoomba, 2018)

In general, the young people are optimistic about finding ways to settle in. They worry about their families left behind and particularly their parents who they often say suffer more without some of their children, parents and siblings. They are learning very quickly but at this stage are not involved very much with activities after school. Many come straight home and do homework and it is the life on the street, the after school and after-hours life, that is very, very different to what they have been used to.



Conclusion



7. Conclusion

In 2018 we interviewed 233 humanitarian immigrant families – adults and children over 5 years of age – and within these families surveyed 632 humanitarian immigrants (462 adults and 170 children and youth) in metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas in three states (NSW, Queensland and Victoria). We will revisit these families in 2019 and again in 2020 to monitor their settlement experiences and outcomes. The key focus of the research is on settlement experiences and outcomes, particularly in the areas of employment, education and training, with a view to developing policy recommendations. Hence, the most important evidence-based findings to date are as follows.

When we began this research project, we thought that the Syrian-conflict intake was an *exceptional* group of refugee arrivals in Australia: very well educated, and sprinkled with a large number of professionals and previously wealthy refugees. We hypothesised our focus of analysis was *a middle-class refugee intake* of Syrians and Iraqis who were articulate and demanding of their rights, not a supplicant forever compliant group of refugees just lucky to be here. Our fieldwork has led us to challenge this view. Yes, they are very well informed and connected to networks in Australia and overseas. Yes, there were many professionals in the intake – particularly from Syria – perhaps many more than in any previous cohort of refugee arrivals. Our fieldwork has highlighted how diverse the intake has been. Simple generalisations do not do service to the very different characteristics of the individuals of the Syrian-conflict intake. We also interviewed families from Afghanistan who arrived at the same time as the Syrian-conflict intake but under the annual humanitarian intake as a control group. We did this because we thought that it would enable us to probe our *exceptionalism* thesis, to see if the Syrian-conflict intake were given preferred treatment compared to other refugee arrivals and to see the impact on the provision of settlement services for all refugees as a result of the one-off intake of 12,000. This report on the first-year findings of a three-year research project cannot yet be definitive in our answers to the issues raised; indeed it makes little attempt to distinguish the experiences of the control group, and includes all of the refugees interviewed in each location. Better and more nuanced understandings will be developed over the next two years. We list below some of the key findings of the research project identified to date, with regard to the interviews and surveys of the refugee families.

Key Finding 1: Thankful to Australia

All the refugees we interviewed were very grateful for the opportunity provided by Australia to provide refuge for themselves and their families. They all want to repay that by contributing to Australia through their employment expertise, and young people, by contributing to the community, economy and labour market – and society.

Key Finding 2: On Arrival Programs and Services for Refugees

The overall finding is that policies and procedures that have been established to support humanitarian immigrant and refugee settlement in the first years of arrival – and the organisations that have successfully tendered to provide these services – are very successful. It is often said that Australia provides world's best practice for the reception of newly-arrived refugees. The evidence strongly supports this assertion in two ways. First, in 2017 the number of refugees arriving in Australia effectively doubled the intake of previous decades. This is because most of the special one-off intake of 12,000 Syrian Conflict refugees that was announced by Prime Minister Abbott in 2015 in fact arrived in 2017. In addition, the annual intake of humanitarian entrants was increased to 16,250 in 2017-18 from the 13,750 intake of 2015-16. These two facts meant a one-off doubling of the humanitarian intake. While service providers were stretched to meet this unprecedented increase in demand for their services, the system coped very well. The evidence to support this second assertion is found in the fact that nearly every one of the 233 humanitarian immigrant families interviewed in 2018 were full of praise for the support that they received on-arrival, a time of great stress and uncertainty for them. These families could not speak more highly of the support that they received in these first three months.

Key Finding 3: Refugee Employment a Key Challenge

The evidence strongly attests that for refugees and humanitarian immigrants, getting **access to the Australian labour market is perhaps the greatest settlement challenge** that they face. Data published by the Productivity Commission (2016: 476) shows that the unemployment rate for migrants who arrived as part of the humanitarian intake (37.7%) was more than three times that of migrants who arrived as part of the skilled intake (11.6%) and nearly double that of migrants who arrived as part of the family intake (21.0%). In our recent fieldwork with newly-arrived refugees two key findings emerged in relation to the problems that they faced in getting a job.

First, most of the adult refugees interviewed raised a *Catch 22* that they all faced trying to get a job in Australia: when they applied for a job they were asked if they had prior Australian employment **experience**. Because they did not, they were not successful in getting the job.

Second, many refugees and humanitarian immigrants arrive with professional qualifications and work experience. This is particularly the case with recently-arrived Syrian refugees: many of those we interviewed were health professionals, engineers, architects, pharmacists, IT and finance professionals and the like, back in Syria. Many others – including those from Iraq – were mechanics, drivers, plumbers or electricians or held similar trades. In all cases issues related to the **recognition in Australia of their professional and technical skills** are a great and often unsurmountable barrier to their gaining similar employment in Australia. This has great cost to the refugee families themselves, but also great cost to the nation. All the refugees we interviewed were very grateful for the opportunity provided by Australia to provide refuge for their families. They all want to repay that by making a contribution to Australia through their employment expertise. These endemic problems apply not only to refugees but also to skilled permanent and temporary immigrants.

One pathway to increase refugee employment, reduce socio-economic disadvantage, and generate more successful settlement outcomes in refugee communities is the establishment of private business enterprises that are owned and/or controlled by refugees. Some of Australia's most successful businesses were started by humanitarian immigrants. However, most humanitarian immigrants, like most immigrants who become entrepreneurs in Australia, establish small and medium-sized enterprises. By establishing a business refugees can create their own job.

Key Finding 4: English Language Training

English language competency was seen by refugees as their biggest hurdle in accessing employment: most were delaying entry into the labour market while their English-language ability was getting up to speed.

While there was a lot of praise for **English language classes** there was also considerable concern voiced by the adults interviewed in families, regarding overcrowding, and inflexibility in delivery including place, time of day and level of education related to language ability. Furthermore, there was a clash noted between participation in English language classes and seeking employment, which created significant frustrations for the refugee respondents. Again, the doubling of the intake has put considerable stress on resources.

Key Finding 5: Friendly Neighbours

Over 90 per cent of the refugee adults surveyed in Queensland reported that people in their neighbourhood were friendly compared to 87.3% of refugees in the national BNLA survey. Queensland refugees were just behind NSW refugees (92.3%) in this regard. Toowoomba had the strongest results, followed by Brisbane and Logan, though even in Logan 82.8% of refugees reported that people in their neighbourhood were friendly.

Immigrants and Refugees have settled successfully in regional and rural Australia (Collins et al., 2016). Regional and Rural Australia has an unmet appetite for more immigrants and refugees. Immigrants and Refugees get a warm welcome in regional and rural Australia, feel safe living there and feel that their children have a great future.

According to our 2018 survey of 165 newly arrived adult refugees and 59 young people from Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan who settled in Queensland (in suburban Brisbane and in regional Logan and Toowoomba), those who settled in Toowoomba have had the easiest time integrating and feeling a part of their local communities. One key issue related to immigrant and refugee settlement in regional and rural Australia relates to the warmth of the welcome. The stereotypes of the Australian bush being 'redneck' would suggest new immigrants would find settlement difficult outside large metropolitan centres. An earlier research project on immigrants living in regional Australia a decade ago, however, dispelled this myth, with 80% of respondents reporting a warm welcome. Our new research confirmed this finding, with 54% of the refugees surveyed in Queensland overall – and 66% in Toowoomba – reporting it was 'very easy' or 'easy' to make friends in Australia.

Key Finding 6: A Good Place to Bring up their Children

The overall motivation of most of our refugee informants to come to Australia was driven by the need to secure a better future for their children. Many of the adults conceded that while they themselves might have difficulties with language or employment **they were confident that their children would have a good life in Australia**: 84.2% of Queensland refugees thought that their neighbourhood is a good place to bring up their children. This was similar to the NSW result and only slightly behind the BNLA national result.

Key Finding 7: Good Schools for Refugee Children

Within Queensland, around eight out of ten refugee parents living in Brisbane and Toowoomba were **very happy with their local schools**, a very strong result. Logan respondents were not so convinced about the local schooling opportunities for their children with only about half (48.3%) of the refugee parents surveyed happy with their local schools.

Key Finding 8: Young Refugees are Impressive

The **young refugees** were overwhelmingly impressive in their English language skills given the short time they had been in Australia. They were optimistic about the future, in the main had a wide network of friends from various backgrounds and really enjoyed their schools. The great majority of young refugee informants in Queensland – 76.3% – thought that school was ‘excellent’ or ‘very good’, and a further 20.3% thought that it was satisfactory. Of course, the first six months had been difficult for them, missing friends, grandparents and the lifestyle, but they had adjusted with the help of community organisations and school teachers.

Key Finding 9: Queensland a Safe Place

Queensland is a safe place for refugees to settle. Despite noting early difficulties learning English and finding employment, an overwhelming majority of new refugees in Queensland (87%) reported feeling safe in their neighbourhoods, slightly lower than the national BNLA figure (93%). It is remarkable that all the refugees living in Toowoomba felt safe living there, as did nearly all of those living in Brisbane (96.3%). Logan was not considered as safe as other locations but even in Logan two in three respondents (65.5%) felt safe in the area.

Key Finding 10: Talking to the Neighbours

Another aspect of social inclusion and successful settlement relates to whether new refugee arrivals had social relations with – talked to – their neighbours.

Overall 43% of our Queensland refugee informants reported that it was easy to talk to their neighbours, a similar outcome to the national BNLA study (48.5%). Notably, the Queensland refugee respondents had lived next to their neighbours for less than a year while the majority of those surveyed in the BNLA had lived next to their neighbours for several years. In contrast to this trend, Logan respondents noted the most difficulty talking to their new neighbours, with only one in four (25.9%) refugee informants reporting that it was easy to talk to their neighbours.

Key Finding 11: Understanding Australian Culture

Like any country, Australia has its cultural idiosyncrasies that newcomers find different and sometimes difficult to understand and to adjust to. This is often seen in colloquial language and expressions as well as other cultural mores. In the national BNLA, six out of ten refugees (59.4%) found it easy to understand Australian ways and culture.

The newly-arrived refugees in Queensland did much better – 68.5% found it easy to understand Australian ways and culture – in a much shorter period of settlement. Toowoomba was the area where respondents had the most success understanding Australian ways and culture with 83% finding it easy to understand Australian ways and culture.

Key Finding 12: Most Refugees Happy in Queensland

A personal aspect of successful refugee settlement relates to the level of happiness of the individual refugees. **Two in three refugees in Queensland are happy living there:** 38.2% of refugee informants in Queensland reported that they were “very happy” and another 22.4% mostly happy. This is a remarkable outcome given the trauma that these families had experienced and of course the recent timing of their arrival and settlement.

Key Finding 13: Queensland not Racist to Newly-Arrived Refugees

We asked our refugee informants about experiences of racism in Australia. Perhaps surprisingly – given the dog whistle politics about refugees that has dominated political and public discourses in Australia for two decades at least – **most said that they had not experienced racism in Queensland**. A few informants recounted an incident in public that they felt was racist.

Key Finding 14: All Refugees Await Australian Citizenship

Most of the refugees felt happy with their lives in Australia and were positive about their future. All of those interviewed stated that they wanted to take up Australian citizenship as soon as possible.

The biggest worry that refugees in Queensland faced was that of family reunion. Most of the refugees still had family in their home country who they contacted regularly – often daily, using a range of social media and apps. Their key priority is to get these family members out to Australia, but most find that it has not been possible to do so.



References



8. References

- Amin, A. (2002). Ethnicity and the Multicultural City: Living with Diversity, *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*, 34(6), 959-980.
- Auer, D (2017). 'Language Roulette – the effect of random placement on refugees' labour market integration', National Center of Competence in Research – The Migration – Mobility Nexus, Working Paper #11 January 2017, Switzerland.
- Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) (2015). 'Humanitarian migrants the most entrepreneurial: ABS report', Media Release, 4 September 2015, accessed 19 February 2019, <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Previousproducts/3418.0Media%20Release12009-10?opendocument&tabname=Summary&prodno=3418.0&issue=2009-10&num=&view=>
- Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) (2015). 'Humanitarian migrants the most entrepreneurial: ABS report', Media Release, 4 September 2015, accessed 19 February 2019, <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Previousproducts/3418.0Media%20Release12009-10?opendocument&tabname=Summary&prodno=3418.0&issue=2009-10&num=&view=>
- Australian Council of TESOL Associations (ACTA) (2017a). 'ACTA Submission to the Joint Standing Committee on Migration Inquiry into Migrant Settlement Outcomes', Submissions 108, 108.1, May 2017, accessed 19 February 2019, https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Joint/Migration/settlementoutcomes/Submissions?main_0_content_1_RadGrid1ChangePage=6_20
- Australian Council of TESOL Associations (ACTA) (2017b). 'ACTA Specific Proposals on English Language Provision Supplement to Submission 108 to the Joint Standing Committee on Migration Inquiry into Migrant Settlement Outcomes', Submission 108 – supplementary submission, October 2017, accessed 19 February 2019, https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Joint/Migration/settlementoutcomes/Submissions?main_0_content_1_RadGrid1ChangePage=6_20
- Baker, N. (2019). 'Asylum seekers, immigration and border protection look set to define Australia's next election', SBS News, 21 February 2019, accessed 24 February 2019, <https://www.sbs.com.au/news/a-history-of-australia-s-offshore-detention-policy>.
- Baxendale, R. and Lewis, R. (2016). 'Federal election 2016: Dutton on refugees; Shorten in Sydney; Turnbull in Cairns', *The Australian*, 18 May 2016, accessed 19 February 2019, <https://www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/federal-election-2016-dutton-on-refugees-shorten-in-sydney-turnbull-in-cairns/news-story/16e8096aa3081a62dc9cd306a25f9158>
- Bernstein, H and DuBois, N. (2018). 'Bringing Evidence to the Refugee Integration Debate', Research Report, April 2018, USA: Urban Institute.
- BNLA (2017). *Building a New Life in Australia (BNLA): The Longitudinal Study of Humanitarian Migrants – Findings from the first three waves*. Canberra: Department of Social Services. ISBN: 978-1-925318-65-4 (Print)

- Bourdieu, P. and Passeron, J. C., (1990). *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture*, London, California, New Delhi: Sage Publications Inc.
- Bourke, L. (2015). 'Abbott government agrees to resettle 12,000 Syrian refugees in Australia, Sydney Morning Herald 9th September', *Sydney Morning Herald*; accessed 5 May 2017, <http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/abbott-government-agrees-to-resettle-12000-syrian-refugees-in-australia-20150909-gjibqz.html>
- Cahill, C. (2007). 'Doing Research with Young People: Participatory Research and the Rituals of Collective Work', *Children's Geographies*, 5:3, 297-312, DOI: 10.1080/14733280701445895
- Campbell, C., Proctor, H., and Sherington, G. (2009). *School choice: how parents negotiate the new school market in Australia*: Crows Nest, N.S.W.: Allen & Unwin.
- Colic-Peisker, V. and Tilbury, F. (2007), *Refugees and Employment: The Effect of Visible Difference on Discrimination: Final Report*, Western Australia: Murdoch University; accessed 5 May 2017, <http://library.bsl.org.au/jspui/bitstream/1/811/1/Refugees%20and%20employment.pdf>
- Collins J. (2017a). *Private and community sector initiatives in refugee employment and entrepreneurship*, Migration and Border Policy Working Paper No 6, December 2017, Lowy Institute for International Policy, Sydney, Australia, accessed 19 February 2019, <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/publications/private-and-community-sector-initiatives-refugee-employment-and-entrepreneurship>
- Collins J. (2017b) *From Refugee to Entrepreneur in Sydney in less than Three Years*, Sydney: UTS Business School, accessed 19 February 2019, <http://www.ssi.org.au/services/ignite>
- Collins, J (2011). 'The Global Financial Crisis, Immigration and Immigrant Unemployment, and Social Inclusion in Australia' in John Higley , John Nieuwenhuysen , Stine Neerup (eds.), *Immigration And The Financial Crisis The United States and Australia Compared*, Monash Studies in Global Movements Series, Cheltnam, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing, pp 145-158.
- Collins, J. Krivokapic-Skoko, B. and Monani, D. (2016) *New Immigrants Improving Productivity in Australian Agriculture*, Canberra: Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation, accessed 19 February 2019, <https://www.agrifutures.com.au/wp-content/uploads/publications/16-027.pdf>
- Collins, J., Krivokapic-Skoko, B. and Watson, K (2017). *From Boats to Businesses: The Remarkable Journey of Hazara Refugee Entrepreneurs in Adelaide*, Centre for Business and Social Innovation, Sydney: UTS Business School, accessed 19 February 2019, <https://www.uts.edu.au/sites/default/files/2017-10/From%20Boats%20to%20Businesses%20Full%20Report%20-%20Web.pdf>
- Collins, J., Reid, C., Groutsis, D., Watson, K., Kaabel, A., and Hughes, S. (2018). *Syrian and Iraqi Refugee Settlement in Australia*, Working Paper no.1, accessed 27 May 2019, <https://www.uts.edu.au/research-and-teaching/our-research/centre-business-and-social-innovation/research/projects-4-0>

- Correa–Velez, I., Barnett A. G., and Gifford, S. (2013). 'Working for a Better Life: Longitudinal Evidence on the Predictors of Employment Among Recently Arrived Refugee Migrant Men Living in Australia', *International Migration* 53(2): 321-338.
- Delaporte, I. and Piracha, M. (2018). 'Integration of humanitarian migrants into the host country labour market: evidence from Australia', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 44(15): 2480–2505.
- Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) (2015). 'Australia will resettle an additional 12,000 refugees who are fleeing the conflict in Syria and Iraq', Media Release, accessed 26 February 2019, https://foreignminister.gov.au/releases/Pages/2015/jb_mr_150909a.aspx
- Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) (2017). 'Syrian Crisis Humanitarian and Resilience Package – Design', accessed 26 February 2019, [Syria Crisis Humanitarian and Resilience Package design document](#)
- Department of Social Services (DSS) (2019). 'Syrian/Iraqi humanitarian crisis', accessed 27 May 2019, <https://www.dss.gov.au/settlement-services-programs-policy/syrian-iraqi-humanitarian-crisis>
- Elliott, S. and Yusuf, I. (2014). "Yes, we can; but together": Social capital and refugee resettlement', *Kotuitui: New Zealand Journal of Social Sciences Online*, 9(2): 101, doi:10.1080/1177083X.2014.951662.
- Fozdar, F., & Hartley, L. (2013). 'Refugee resettlement in Australia: What we know and what we need to know', *Refugee Survey Quarterly*, 32(3), 23–51. doi:10.1093/rsq/hdt009.
- Fusch, P. I. and Ness, L. R. (2015). 'Are we there yet? Data saturation in qualitative research', *The Qualitative Report*, 20(9): 1408.
- Hebbani, A. and Preece, M. (2015). 'Spoken English does matter: Findings from an exploratory study to identify predictors of employment among African refugees in Brisbane', *Australasian Review of African Studies*, 36(2): 110-130.
- Hugo, G. (2011), *Economic, social and civic contributions of first and second generation humanitarian entrants*, Canberra: Department of Immigration and Citizenship; accessed 5 May 2017, <https://www.border.gov.au/ReportsandPublications/Documents/research/economic-social-civic-contributions-about-the-research2011.pdf>
- International Organization for Migration (IOM) (2016). *2015 Global Migration Trends Fact Sheet*, Geneva: IOM Global Migration Data Centre.
- Johnson, R. B. and Onwuegbuzie, A. J. (2004). 'Mixed methods research: a research paradigm whose time has come', *Educational Researcher*, 33(7): 14-26.
- Kingsley, P. (2016). *The New Odyssey: the Story of Europe's Refugee Crisis*, London: Guardian Books and Faber and Faber.
- Maley, W. (2016). *What is a Refugee?* New York: Oxford University Press.

- Murad, N (2018). 'I was an Isis sex slave. I tell my story because it is the best weapon I have', *The Guardian*, 6 October 2018, accessed 20 February 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/oct/06/nadia-murad-isis-sex-slave-nobel-peace-prize>
- Newman, A., Bimrose, J., Nielsen, I. and Zan, H. (2018). 'Vocational Behavior of Refugees: How Do Refugees Seek Employment, Overcome Work-related Challenges, and Navigate Their Careers?' *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 105(April 2018): 1-184.
- OECD (2015), *International Migration Outlook 2015*, Paris: OECD Publishing.
- OECD (2015). 'International Migration Outlook 2015', accessed 30 May 2019, https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/social-issues-migration-health/international-migration-outlook-2015_migr_outlook-2015-en
- Perry, C. (1998). 'A structured approach for presenting theses', *Australasian Marketing Journal* (AMJ), 6(1): 63-85.
- Phillimore, J. (2011). 'Refugees, acculturation strategies, stress and integration', *Journal of Social Policy*, 40(3): 575–593.
- Productivity Commission (PC) (2016). *Migrant Intake into Australia*, Inquiry Report No 77, 13 April 2016, Canberra.
- Rabionet, S. E. (2011). 'How I learned to design and conduct semi-structured interviews: An ongoing and continuous journey', *The Qualitative Report*, 16(2): 563.
- Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA) (2016). *Australia's Response to a World in Crisis: Community views on the 2016-17 Humanitarian Program*, Surry Hills: RCOA.
- Reid, C., Collins, C., and Singh, M. (2014): *Global Teachers, Australian Perspectives: Goodbye Mr Chips, Hello Ms Banerjee*, Singapore: Springer Press.
- Savin-Baden, M., and Howell Major, C. (2013). *Qualitative Research: The Essential Guide to Theory and Practice*, Abington, UK: Routledge.
- Stave, S. E. and Hillesund, S. (2015). *Impact of Syrian refugees on the Jordanian labour market. Findings from the governorates of Amman, Irbid and Mafrq*, Geneva: International Labour Organization.
- UNHCR (2016). 'Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2015'; accessed 5 May 2017, <http://www.unhcr.org/576408cd7.pdf>
- UNHCR (2018). 'Figures at a glance', accessed 19 February 2019, <https://www.unhcr.org/figures-at-a-glance.html>



Appendices



Appendix A: Semi-structured interview schedules

REFUGEE SETTLEMENT OUTCOMES

Questions for Adult refugees

1. What is the composition of the family unit? (Including number and ages of children)

2. Where was each of you born? What is your nationality?

Pre-migration Phase

Education

3. Can you please tell me about your education background prior to coming here?

(Qualifications and training)

Work experience

4. Can you please tell me about your employment background prior to coming here?

(Work and work experience over time periods; business owner?)

Social Context

5. What was life like for you and your family prior to coming here?

Post-migration Phase

Settlement

6. Please tell me how you came to settle in this location in Australia?

(Previous knowledge? Will you stay?)

7. What is life like for you and your family living in this suburb/town?

(Best/worst aspects, neighbours)

8. Can you please tell me of your family and friends in Australia and other places?

(Contact, remittances?)

9. How happy are you with your current life in Australia?

Education

10. Can you please tell me about your education experiences since coming to live here? (English language, other courses, informal English learning)

Work experience

11. Can you please tell me about your employment experiences since coming to live here? (Job applications, kinds of jobs, difficulties in finding work)

Help us to make things better

12. If there was one piece of information that you wish you knew before arrival in Australia what would that be and how would it make settling in Australia easier?

Hopes for the Future

13. What are your overall hopes for your life in Australia in the future?

REFUGEE SETTLEMENT OUTCOMES

Questions for refugee young people in education

There are no right or wrong answers and you don't have to answer a question if it makes you feel uncomfortable.

(How old are you? What is your gender?)

1. How are you finding school/TAFE at the moment?

You could talk about the classes, friends, interests, compare previous education experiences...

2. What subjects and activities do you like/dislike (why)?

3. How is your English learning going?

You could talk about your English classes and what you think of them.

4. What are your hopes and plans for the future?

5. What activities are available in your local neighbourhood? Do you participate in any of these? Do you have friends?

6. What do you do after school/TAFE?

Do you work part time, watch the television, do homework?

7. Help us to make things better

If there was one piece of information that you wish you knew before arrival in Australia what would that be and how would it make settling in Australia easier?

8. Do you want to ask us anything?

Appendix B: Surveys

REFUGEE SETTLEMENT OUTCOMES SURVEY – ADULTS (ONE to be completed for EACH adult in a family)

1. What year were you born?

2. What is your gender?

3. What is your marital status?

4. What religion are you?

5. What languages do you speak?

.....

6. To which ethnic group do you belong?

7. Have you found it difficult finding accommodation in Australia? (Please tick one) ☐ Yes
☐ No

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 |

8. Since you came to Australia, how easy have you found it to... (please tick 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				

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

(Please tick 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				

10. How well do you... (Please tick 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				

11. How many paid jobs do you currently have? (Please tick one)

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

12. Have you found it hard getting a job? (Please tick) ☐ Yes ☐ No

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

(Please tick 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 |

13. How confident are you about your employment future in Australia (please tick one)

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

14. How happy are you with your current life in Australia (please tick one)

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

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

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

REFUGEE SETTLEMENT OUTCOMES SURVEY – YOUNG PEOPLE

1. What is your gender? (Tick one) ☐ male ☐ female

2. What is your age?

3. How are you finding school/TAFE at the moment? (Tick one)

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

4. If you had to give yourself a mark from 1-5 for speaking, reading, writing and listening in English what would you give? (Circle the response)

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

5. Do you feel you belong to the local community? (circle the response)

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

6. Do you feel safe in your neighbourhood? (Tick one) ☐ yes ☐ no

7. How many of your friends are from different backgrounds to you? (Tick one)

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

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

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

Other _____

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

Contact UTS

For more information about this report, contact:

Katherine Watson
Senior Research Assistant
UTS Business School
E: Katherine.Watson@uts.edu.au

cbsi.uts.edu.au

Centre for Business and Social Innovation
UTS Business School
PO Box 123
Broadway NSW 2007