CENTRE FOR MULTICULTURAL YOUTH

Forging futures:

HOW YOUNG PEOPLE SETTLING IN VICTORIA ARE FARING

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About CMY

CMY is a Victorian not-for-profit organisation supporting young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds to build better lives in Australia. CMY believes diversity is a cornerstone of Australia's success; respect for everyone's human rights is essential for a fair and equal society; and that everyone should be able to feel like they belong and can participate fully. This is reflected in CMY's 25 years of working with young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds, in order that they might become connected, empowered and influential Australians.

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The Centre for Multicultural Youth is a Victorian not-for-profit organisation supporting young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds to build better lives in Australia.

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This paper was written before the federal election in September 2013 and does not reflect any subsequent changes to government policy or departments. CMY is planning to report on future policy changes that may affect this group of young people.

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1. Executive Summary

Ten years ago, the Centre for Multicultural Youth (CMY) published a paper titled *Settling In*. This report explored definitions and meanings of 'good settlement' for newly arrived refugee young people making their home in Victoria. The authors of the paper reported that:

"In the absence of early and adequate settlement support, the risk that young people will require assistance in the future to address issues such as homelessness, family breakdown, poor health, crime, drug and alcohol use and other social problems, is magnified." [1]

To ensure young people arriving in Australia were supported to settle well over time, *Settling In* mapped the first comprehensive description of what a refugee young person needs to 'settle well'. The paper also highlighted the need to address number of gaps in support services and systems to meet the needs of young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds settling in Australia, and to support their self-reliance and independence. The development of a national framework for refugee youth resettlement was recommended to provide a mechanism to support consistent service delivery and outcomes measurement of youth settlement across Australia.[2]

A lot has changed in the intervening ten years. The percentage of Victoria's population that are youth has shrunk slightly but grown more diverse. More Victorians are now born overseas and are from different countries to a decade ago. Victorians are also less religious than they were ten years ago, with more than one fifth (21%) of all Australian's now speaking a language other than English in the home.[3]

The economic, security and socio-political landscapes in Australia, our region and globally have also changed. Median household weekly incomes have gone down while weekly rent has gone up placing many Victorians in housing stress. Transformations in education and work have been significant and more people are temporarily migrating to Australia for study and work than ever before. While more young Australians are completing year 12, entry into higher education and the labour market are now more competitive. Globalisation and advances in technology continue to alter the ways we travel, work, engage with services and communicate. In the meantime, mass migration flows, terrorism and climate change have all fundamentally shifted how we think about security, immigration and our borders – with protracted conflicts leading to the largest numbers of displaced people the world has ever hosted.

All of this is influencing the make-up of Australia's Migration Programme and national conversations around settlement, citizenship and multiculturalism. This has implications for the settlement supports, experiences and outcomes of young people settling in Victoria and over the last decade, services and supports for new arrivals to Australia have changed. Some of the gaps identified in 2006 have been addressed, with service systems responding in a number of areas to the needs of newly arrived young people. However, there remains more to be done.

As migration patterns shift, and our communities with them, service systems and responses must constantly keep up with changing needs of young people and the conditions within which they settle. Improvements must build on what we know works, which requires comprehensive mapping of the impacts of service responses and interventions, as well as settlement outcomes of young people over time. We must also be willing to adapt and modify systems and respond as our communities change and we learn more about the needs and interests of Victoria's increasingly diverse youth population. This requires that we look beyond core settlement programs to how all services and community supports are responding to young people settling in Victoria – when they first arrive and over time.

In this paper, we take a look back on the settlement experiences of young Victorians who arrived in Australia in the preceding five to ten years. The release of the National Youth Settlement Framework in 2016 has provided a tool to guide examination of how the settlement needs of young people are being met and how young people are faring.

Using the National Youth Settlement Framework as a guide to what good youth settlement looks like, this paper explores a range of indicators to measure the settlement outcomes of young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds in Australia. This is the first time the settlement outcomes of young people have been examined in this way in Australia.

The paper provides an insight into how services and supports are meeting the needs of young people settling in Victoria across each of the four domains outlined in the National Youth Settlement Framework from the perspective of young service users. This provides us with a comprehensive look at the intersecting domains of settlement and how young people are experiencing the services and supports that are available to them. The paper offers a range of recommendations from young people for improving services and supports in each of these domains. Based on these, the paper outlines a series of recommendations for government, services and the wider community to support youth settlement in Victoria.

"It was difficult in school when not everyone was being inclusive. We want an inclusive Australia, or else we can't claim ourselves as one of the most multicultural nations in the world."

- Female, 20 years old, Hong Kong, has lived in Australia for five to ten years

2 Key findings

Seven out of ten young people report that they are doing well across all settlement outcome measures, but one out of four young people settling in Victoria do not feel that people from their own (or similar) cultural backgrounds are valued.

The young people we surveyed identified the following as protective factors (factors that promote settlement outcomes) during their first five years in Australia:

- little or no experience of discrimination
- English language proficiency
- engagement in volunteering and community life

During their first five years in Australia, of the young people we surveyed:

- 76% had a good or very good relationship with their family
- 60% had friends who were there for them when they needed them (always or most of the time)
- 60% had someone to go to when they needed help (always or most of the time)
- 20% were volunteering
- 47% rated their mental health as OK or poor
- 42% experienced some housing insecurity
- 28% sometimes or rarely had enough money to pay for the things they needed

Housing instability and poor mental health were the two key factors that had the greatest negative impact on settlement outcomes. Young people who experienced these were also more likely:

- to not feel confident to achieve their goals for the future
- to not feel like they belong in Australia
- to feel as though people from their own (or similar) cultural backgrounds are not valued in Australia.

89% of young people agree with the statement:

'I feel confident I can achieve the goals I have set for the future'

This differed depending on the migration (or visa) stream:

92% FAMILY
87% SKILLED
81% HUMANITARIAN

Length of time in Australia appears to impact upon outcomes on the settlement markers related to sense of belonging:

1ST 2 YEARS: 23% do not feel like they belong in Australia
AFTER 2 YEARS: 14% do not feel like they belong in Australia

1ST 2 YEARS: 31% feel that people from their own (or similar) cultural backgrounds are not valued in Australia
AFTER 2 YEARS: 25% feel that people from their own (or similar) cultural backgrounds are not valued in Australia

1ST 2 YEARS: 19% are not comfortable to express their religion
AFTER 2 YEARS: 23% are not comfortable to express their religion

3 Recommendations

3.1 Invest in the service system

- That the Federal Government, working with State and Local governments, adopts the National Youth Settlement Framework (MYAN, 2016) as a framework for a national youth settlement strategy to support consistency and long-term coordination of settlement supports and services for young people across Australia.
- That Federal and State Government continue to resource multicultural youth specialists to build good practice capabilities within mainstream and settlement services to strengthen transitions to generalist youth services for young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds.
- That the State Government works with youth services to develop and adopt a set of service standards for good multicultural youth work practice, including family-focused youth work.
- That the State Government support professional development for generalist workers to meet these standards for working with refugee and migrant young people in Victoria.

3.2 Invest in the community

- That the State Government continues to invest in targeted supports and programs that assist young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds with identified needs to stay in school, and that engage with families to support these young people.
- That the State Government continues to invest in targeted supports and programs that assist young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds to transition into employment.
    - That all levels of government support strategies and activities that build the capacity of ethno-specific organisations to assist new and emerging communities to support themselves.
    - That local councils work to engage more with newly-arrived residents, including providing information about what the Council's role is and how residents can have a say in issues impacting upon their community.
    - That all levels of government actively promote and resource social cohesion initiatives that support all Australians to build intercultural connections and understanding.
    - That all levels of government resource and support program models that employ young people as bicultural and youth facilitators. Such models recognise the skills, strengths and social capital unique to young people and enable them to enact agency in their communities while promoting inclusion.
    - That State and Local government support local initiatives to foster intercultural and diverse connections among young people and their families – such as homework clubs (e.g. OSHLSPS), sports, arts, youth programs, leadership opportunities, and voluntary work.

3.3 Invest in young people

When they first arrive…

That the Federal Government work with MYAN Australia to draw on the National Youth Settlement Framework to develop a common youth needs assessment tool for use by Humanitarian Settlement Program (HSP) providers assessing needs of young people when they first arrive.

That the Federal Government support HSP providers to implement the National Youth Settlement Framework as a tool for assessing and measuring how their services and programs are responding to the particular needs of young people settling in Australia. This would provide a more robust and nationally consistent evidence-base to inform settlement program development and service improvement with young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds, their families and communities.

During the settlement period (the first five years in Australia)…

- That all levels of government work with the community and non-government sectors to deliver youth programs that build social and cultural capital for newly arrived young people. This includes programs that:
  - utilise peer-to-peer approaches, are youth-led, employ diverse staff, adopt sport and recreation strategies and promote young people's engagement in the wider community,
  - promote young people's understanding of their rights and responsibilities, particularly the legal and service systems and financial literacy, and
  - engage with young people in the context of their family, to ensure their families and communities have the knowledge and information to support them.

Over time…

That all levels of government and those working with young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds ensure young people are included as active participants at all levels of planning and decision-making.

"Social participation grows when communities organise themselves."

- Focus group participant, Workshop 1 (metropolitan Melbourne)

4 Background

Australia has a long history of welcoming new migrants and refugees – a large proportion that are young and that settle in Victoria each year.[4] Around 15 per cent of all permanent youth arrivals to Victoria each year arrive via the Humanitarian Programme and are eligible to access on-arrival case management support as well as ongoing settlement support during their first five years. Specialist settlement service agencies provide these supports to facilitate social and economic participation, personal well-being, independence and community connectedness.[5] However, the majority of young people settling in Victoria, the 85 per cent who are not humanitarian arrivals, receive most of their settlement assistance and support via family, community and mainstream organisations – including schools, community networks and government agencies. Investment in understanding the diverse settlement needs and outcomes of all young people, and the service system capacity and requirements to respond to these needs, is a long-term investment in Victoria's future.

Young people who are settling have distinct needs to adults and their Australian-born peers requiring targeted, evidence-based youth-specific supports and services. While the first five years of settlement are recognised as an important period for investing in support to assist new arrivals to become active participants in and contributors to their new home, for many, settlement can be a much longer and more complicated path.

Compared to the experience of adults, the developmental tasks of adolescence can complicate settlement for young people. During adolescence, young people experience rapid physical, emotional and social changes.[6] These changes occur while young people are also making significant transitions on their path to independence (such as the transition to secondary school, to work and into adult relationships) – this is a time when vulnerability and risk of social exclusion can increase.[7] Unlike their Australian-born peers, young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds settling in Australia often experience this while also "juggling a range of pressures and complex relationships, negotiating family and cultural obligations and responsibilities while finding their own place in Australian society".[8]

Young people and people from more newly arrived backgrounds can also face particular barriers to accessing the resources, information and opportunities that can support their full and equal participation in Australian life. This can place them at greater risk of social and economic disadvantage in both the short and longer term.

In addition to young people having distinct needs to adults and their Australian-born peers, young people from refugee or migrant backgrounds may experience settlement differently. For example, although most young people "will have had no choice, by virtue of their age, about leaving their country, culture, family and friends" to settle in Australia[9], young people from refugee and refugee-like backgrounds are likely to have experienced a range of pre-arrival factors that may make settlement more complex. For instance, torture and trauma, long-periods of insecurity and temporary settlement, disrupted education and family separation.

Australia has a world-class government-funded settlement services program that provides comprehensive support, including English language assistance, to new arrivals from refugee and humanitarian backgrounds and other eligible migrants during their initial settlement period and over their first five years in Australia. A suite of state and local government and community services compliment this system, an important component of which is the provision of targeted support to young people.

As the Migration Programme changes according to the priorities of the government of the day as influenced by national and global economic, social and political considerations, settlement service systems and the broader community must constantly adapt – this includes responding to new and emerging evidence of the particular needs of young people. To keep up governments and services must continuously evaluate and review how we are supporting young people to settle and how the community is responding as our communities grow and diversify.

4.1 Australia's Migration Programme is changing

Over the last ten years, Australia's permanent Migration Programme has remained at historically high levels – ranging from 161,217 in 2006/07 to 207,325 in 2015/16.[10] Most of the recent growth in permanent arrivals has been among skilled migrants and their families – around 60 per cent of all permanent arrivals.[11] The family reunion component of the program, which enables permanent residents and citizens to sponsor family members to join them in Australia, made up around 30 per cent of the permanent Migration Programme.[12] Recently, there has been a lot of advocacy on the family stream, highlighting that available places are not sufficient to meet current need – with extended delays in processing and increased costs making it increasingly difficult for permanent residents and citizens to reunite with family. The third component of the permanent Migration Programme is the Humanitarian Programme. While the Australian Government has recently agreed to a gradual increase in the number of refugee and humanitarian arrivals, currently this group makes up less than 10 per cent of Australia's permanent arrivals each year.[13]

"One of the most significant developments in the dynamics of migration to Australia since the late 1990s has been the growth in temporary migration", which is demand-driven as opposed to being subject to quotas or caps by Government.[14] In 2006/07, 318,120 temporary migrants entered Australia; this figure was 396,456 ten years later.[15] Student visa holders make up the largest proportion of temporary migrants to Australia.[16]

Student numbers are indicative of global trends that are producing more transient populations of young people willing to move for study and work in a changing globalised economy. The result of their migration on such a large scale has been the creation of more diverse communities in countries where they settle, either temporarily or permanently – "where identifying what's mainstream is increasingly difficult".[17]

4.2 Victoria's youth population is diverse and changing

A significant result of shifts in migration patterns and trends has been the changes within local communities. This is especially true for youth populations, with around one in every five permanent migrants settling in Victoria each year aged between 12 and 24 years.[18] This excludes the more than 100,000 young people who reside temporarily in Victoria for study or work each year.

At the 2016 Census, 10.2 per cent of Victoria's permanent population of almost 6 million people were aged 15 to 24 years.[19] Almost one in ten (9.6 per cent) young Victorian's were born overseas (in 181 countries) and over one third had at least one parent born overseas (39.4 per cent).[20]

The number of students from language backgrounds other than English enrolled in Victorian schools increased by 25 per cent from 2012 to 2016.[21] As of July 2017, 27 per cent of Victorian school students were from language backgrounds other than English (LBOTE), and 13 per cent of the student population were English as an Additional Language (EAL) learners.[22]

The top countries of birth for young Victorian citizens in 2016 were England, India, Philippines, China (excludes SARs and Taiwan), New Zealand, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, Malaysia, and the United States of America.[23] In 2006, these were China (excludes SARs and Taiwan Province), Vietnam, England, Philippines, New Zealand, Hong Kong (SAR of China), India, Sri Lanka, South Africa and Bosnia and Herzegovina.[24]

Compared to adults, the majority of whom enter as skilled migrants, a greater percentage of youth arrivals to Victoria enter Australia via the family and humanitarian streams.[25] Young people also make up a large proportion of those who arrive in Victoria via the humanitarian stream that is those from refugee or refugee-like backgrounds, with around one in five humanitarian entrants aged 12 to 24 years.[26] Over the last ten years there have been changes to this cohort of young Victorians. In 2005, 70.2% of humanitarian youth arrivals to Victoria were born in countries in Africa.[27] By 2015/16, just 13 per cent of this group were from Africa, while 74 per cent were from Asia - Myanmar (23 per cent), Afghanistan (20 per cent), Iraq (16 per cent), Thailand (8 per cent) and the Syrian Arab Republic (7 per cent).[28]

The majority of young people arriving in Victoria settle in and around metropolitan Melbourne. In 2015/16, less than one in ten young people settled in rural and regional Victoria (8 per cent).[29] Young people arriving via the humanitarian stream tend to settle in growth corridors and outer-suburban locations close to community links and services. This compares to permanent youth arrivals in the skilled stream that are shown to settle in higher numbers in the metropolitan areas of Melbourne. This trend reflects previous settlement patterns, with new arrivals often settling in areas close to family and community networks and where they can access relevant services, including education institutions for temporary students.

4.3 The social and economic context in which young people settle is changing

In addition to changing demographics, the lives and futures of young Victorians are also changing as a result of significant changes to the social and economic context locally and globally. VicHealth and CSIRO have identified five megatrends they forecast will impact upon the wellbeing of young Victorians over the coming 20 years. These include: improved understanding and awareness of mental health and wellbeing that will change service delivery models; increasing exposure to wide-ranging online content, privacy breaches and virtual relationships; a more diverse culture, society and consumer market where identifying what's mainstream is increasingly difficult; digital technology and globalisation breaking down traditional barriers and changing the way organisations, societies, governance structures and individuals operate; and rising skills and education levels in emerging economies plus the rise of computing power, device connectivity and artificial intelligence creating a more competitive jobs market.[30]

We already see a number of these trends coming to fruition. For example, more and more young Australians are staying in education longer and rates of year 12 completion are growing.[31] However, participation in higher education has increased only very marginally and participation in public vocational education and training (VET) for young people (particularly 15 to 19 year olds not at school) has been declining.[32] At the same time, the proportion of young Australians aged 17 to 24 years in full-time employment decreased from 2006 to 2016.[33] Notably, rates of educational attainment are not translating into greater employability – youth labour market outcomes have been in decline for many years and have deteriorated since the global financial crisis.[34]

Alongside higher unemployment, precarious employment is also rising. Not only are there now fewer full-time jobs available than a decade ago, but the rate of underemployment for young Australians has reached its highest in 40 years.[35] The age at which young Australians are transitioning into full-time work has also increased. It now takes a young Australian on average 4.7 years from leaving full-time education to entering full-time work – this transition took around one year two decades ago.[36]

While many young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds arrive in Australia with a range of personal skills, competencies, experiences and qualifications that should support their integration into the labour market they often face additional hurdles translating formal education into employability when compared with their Australian born peers.[37] Upon arrival in Australia, young people often face an education and training system that is very different to anything that they have previously experienced. In addition to learning a new language, the absence of cultural and social capital and networks to support navigation of education and training pathways can add additional stress and result in poor education and training outcomes for young people or even disengagement from education and training altogether. Research shows that young people from non-mainly English speaking countries are more likely to not be in employment, education or training than migrants from main English-speaking countries.[38]

Added to challenges in education and employment, are experiences of exclusion – social and economic. Poverty and economic disadvantage are often linked to a lack of resources and, by extension, limited access to opportunities to participate fully and equally in social and civic life – that is, economic disadvantage and social exclusion interconnect.[39] While disadvantage remains a central challenge for many population groups in Australia, recent research from the United Kingdom suggests there may be a growing need to pay more attention to how disadvantage impacts upon successful settlement and, in the long term, social cohesion and community harmony.[40] This is an important finding for those working in settlement policy and practice in Australia, one that asks us to consider how the intersection of disadvantage and settlement can place additional pressures on young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds, their families and communities, not only in the early settlement period but over time.

Research also shows that social determinants have a significant impact on health and well-being.[41] The World Health Organization has defined social determinants as "the conditions, in which people are born, grow, work, live, and age, and the wider set of forces and systems shaping the conditions of daily life" and includes economic policies and systems, development agendas, social norms, social policies and political systems.[42] The distribution of money, power and resources shape social determinants and directly impact upon the settlement outcomes of new arrivals in Australia. This includes influencing how young people participate in community and civic life.[43]

Access to resources and opportunities also influences participation in the civic sphere. Sociologist and youth researcher Ariadne Vromen has written about the "high levels of scepticism and feelings of exclusion many young people hold about formal, electoral politics, in many advanced democracies".[44] However, rather than completely disengaging from the civic sphere, Vromen says young people today are reshaping the ways they learn about and interact with political issues and civic processes at the local, state, federal and international level. In addition to the different forms of civic participation young people engage in, Vromen is referring to the way technology is also transforming how young people engage with the institutions and practices of modern representative government.

Country of birth and English proficiency level has been found to impact upon rates of youth participation in the civic sphere in Australia.[45] The types of activities young people engage in may also be influenced by their length of time in Australia, social capital and access to resources and information.[46] For example, young people born in Australia are more likely to engage in volunteering and social media activities, while those living in Australia for six or more years are more likely to be involved in leadership initiatives and cultural community events.[47] By contrast, those more newly arrived are most likely to participate in sport and recreation or school-based groups.[48] Given that many young people are increasingly active in this sphere online, obstacles to digital participation for newly arrived young people are a further potential barrier to civic participation.[49]

Young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds can face a range of barriers to accessing and mobilising the resources and opportunities that can support them to settle well. "Some of these barriers are structural, some relate to the challenges associated with settling in a new country, and others relate to general vulnerability to social exclusion at key transition points during adolescence and young adulthood." [50] In light of the new and emerging challenges facing Victoria's youth population, it is essential that targeted youth settlement services and supports are familiar with these barriers and how trends are impacting upon them. Greater awareness will allow flexible service responses that can adapt and respond to the changing needs of young people settling in Victoria now and in the years ahead.

4.4 Settlement support and services for young people are changing

Notwithstanding the many challenges they may face, and indeed often because of them, young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds typically arrive in Australia with enormous potential to become active participants in and contributors to Australian society. However, their particular needs often "go unrecognised as they are commonly seen as a sub-set of the broader youth and settlement sectors".[51]

Over the last ten years, there has been greater recognition of the particular needs and challenges facing young people settling in Australia. While we have yet to see all of the identified gaps and concerns addressed, there have been some investments made over the last ten years to improve youth settlement support structures and systems. Examples include:

- the introduction of youth-specific resources and funding within the humanitarian settlement service programs,
- support for youth-specific classes (especially for 15 to 17 year olds not engaging in mainstream schooling) within the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP), and
- most recently the inclusion within the Humanitarian Services Program (HSP) of the requirement for case management plans for every person in a family group, regardless of age, which it is anticipated would ensure young peoples' needs are assessed on arrival.[52]

Beyond humanitarian and early settlement supports there has also been the federal investment in building targeted supports for young people, some of which extends to non-humanitarian arrivals. For example:

- funding to trial new programs and initiatives to better support refugee and migrant young people to transition into employment (the Youth Transitions Support Pilot) and
- a commitment to investing in the development of practice and expertise in multicultural youth specialist organisations across Australia to support those working with this particular cohort in various settings.

State and Local governments, as well as community, faith-based and ethnic organisations, have also played a significant role in supporting youth settlement. In Victoria, some of the services and supports provided to this community that have emerged over the last ten years include targeted education supports (such as the Refugee Education Support Program and OSHLSPS homework clubs), healthcare and post-compulsory education and training subsidies and scholarships, and other public services.

The attitudes and behaviours of community members to new arrivals also influence a sense of welcome and feeling of belonging which are critical to successful settlement. Beyond supporting direct programs and services that remove barriers and address disadvantages for new entrants, it is also necessary to explore measures that can reduce the impact of structural and systemic barriers to settlement, such as racism and discrimination.

In this vein, it is positive to see some recent actions by state and federal governments to directly address more societal level and structural barriers to refugee and migrant community participation. These include the release of a new national multicultural policy and programs focused on strengthening social cohesion and the Victorian Government's Recruit Smarter Initiative that aims to weed out unconscious bias in recruitment.

Equally important to education and awareness campaigns and programs, are policies and laws that protect basic rights and freedoms and leaders who will challenge and respond emphatically to negative public discourse. This includes challenging simplistic and negative reporting from media, leaders, politicians, and the broader community with regards to refugees, asylum seekers, migrant youth offending and terrorism, which continue to have a strong impact on young people's sense of belonging.[53]

One key gap identified in the *Settling In* report that remains ten years on is the lack of an overarching national youth settlement plan or strategy. The purpose of such a strategy would be to guide services in a coordinated approach to the support and referral of newly arrived young people as they settle in Australia over time. *Settling In* recommended that such a strategy would "outline the ways in which young people's settlement needs will be accommodated within existing funding and frameworks across all government departments, setting out a strategic and operational plan." [54] The authors suggested that this required a framework upon which such a strategy could be built – a framework that provided an "outline for a comprehensive settlement support system that takes account of the needs of refugee young people". [55]

"Having friends (both from my country and other countries) helped me the most in different aspects of life, from finding a place to finding a job."

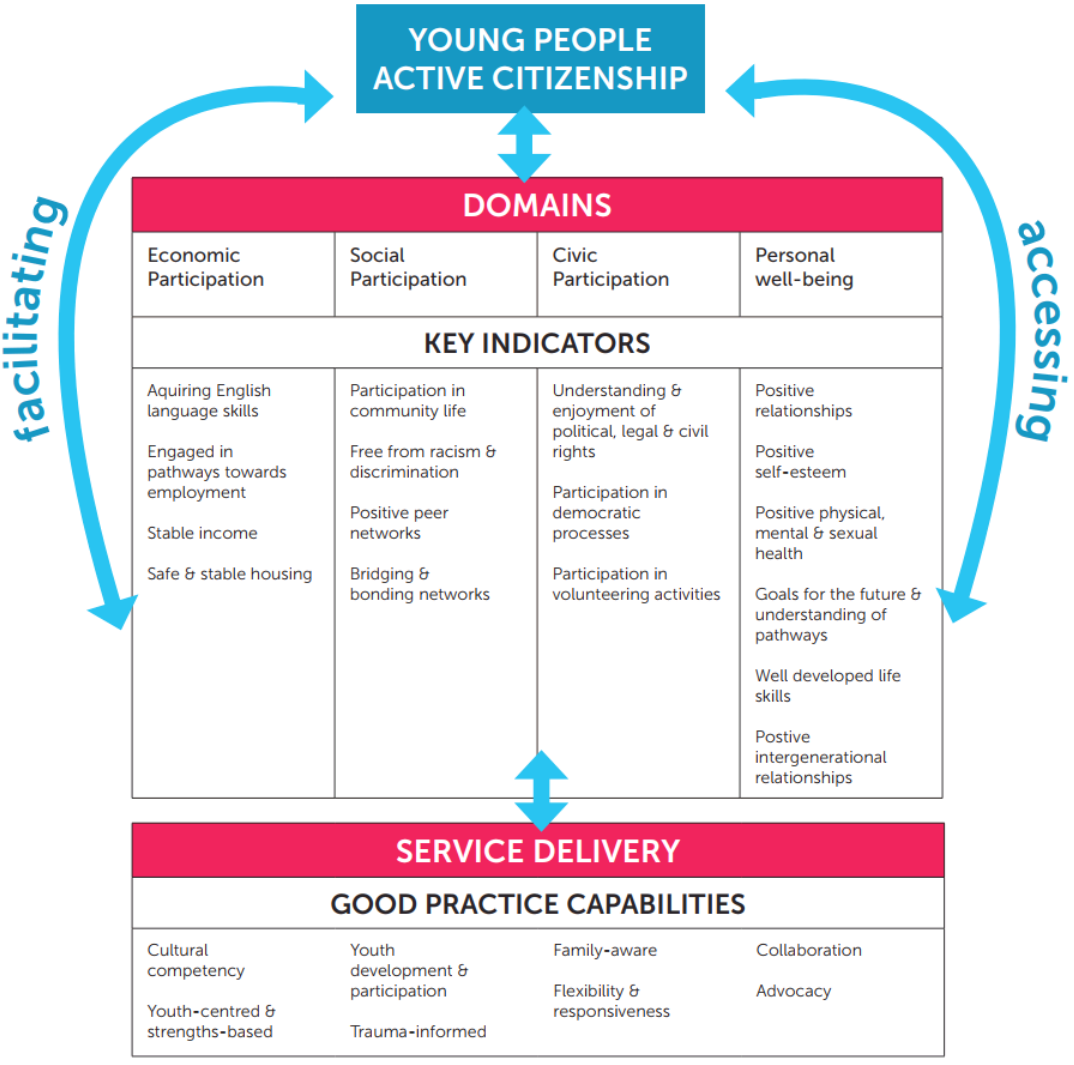
- Female, 26 years old, Persian, has lived in Australia for less than two years

5 The National Youth Settlement Framework

In 2016, Australia's first National Youth Settlement Framework (the Framework) was launched. Developed by MYAN Australia in consultation with young people and the non-government and government sectors, the Framework is designed to provide the tools to support informed policy and service delivery across all areas of young people's engagement with services as they settle into life in Australia.[55] The Framework provides the first set of nationally consistent indicators that support measurement and improvement of service interventions to promote settlement outcomes for young people settling in Australia. Eight good practice capabilities are also provided to guide service responses.

The Framework describes successful settlement in terms of active citizenship and provides a set of markersfor assessing young people's settlement outcomes against this goal. To achieve active citizenship, the Framework outlines a range of interconnected indicators across four domains – economic participation, personal well-being, civic participation and social participation – in which provision of targeted support and services can assist young people to become full and equal participants in Australia.

CMY recognises that, while the Framework is still being introduced into youth and settlement services throughout Australia, much of the practice advocated for in the Framework exists within the youth settlement service context in Victoria. We decided to use the Framework to explore where services were meeting need and where gaps continued to persist. We were also keen to explore how young people understood and assessed their settlement in terms of active citizenship and the outcome measures identified by the Framework.



The National Youth Settlement Framework identifies four indicators of economic participation for young people settling in Australia. These include: acquiring English language skills; engagement in pathways towards employment, including education and training; stable income; and safe and stable housing.

Active Citizenship

The Framework describes active citizenship as the "optimal settlement outcome for young people" in Australia.[56] Ultimately, active citizenship is about participation and belonging. The process of settlement, of becoming an active participant who feels a sense of agency and belonging in society, and who has the social capital necessary to promote participation, involves a complicated series of negotiations and adjustments as refugees and migrants seeking to establish themselves in their new country.[57]

To achieve active citizenship, the Framework identifies 18 indicators where service interventions and supports can promote the settlement of young people. These indicators sit within four overarching domains – social, civic and economic participation, and personal well-being. Many of the indicators are complex, and all are highly interconnected – building the skills, knowledge and networks necessary for achieving success in these domains enables young people to become active citizens.[58] Active citizenship is also influenced by broader socio-political and structural factors within Australian society that can constrain or facilitate young people's sense of belonging and engagement.

Economic participation

Economic participation is central to the engagement of young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds as active citizens in Australian society. Economic participation refers to participation in economic activities that "contribute directly or indirectly to the well-being (or the standard of living) of particular groups of individuals or of society as a whole".[59] Economic participation has significant and long-term benefits for young people, their families and communities, and for a diverse, socially cohesive Australia.[60]

English language skills, employment and education are all recognised as central to supporting economic participation and 'good settlement.' The Australian Government has recently given these three factors particular attention, exploring their potential use as outcomes measures of good settlement not only for individual settlers but also the service providers and agencies supporting them.[61] However, the authors of a framework for conceptualising refugee settlement, Ager and Strang, suggest that use of any individual settlement indicators in isolation, or considering of them as pure 'markers' of integration, is problematic. Despite their importance in facilitating settlement, English language, education and employment represent only three of a range of interconnected factors influencing how young people settle in a new country.[62]

Personal well-being

The largest generation of 10 to 24 year olds in human history is currently living on the planet, and the authors of a 2016 paper published by the Lancet Commission have argued that we are not paying close enough attention to their health and well-being determinants and outcomes.[63] Research shows that young people who have high levels of well-being, or are psychologically resilient, are "more likely to respond constructively to challenges and difficulties they face in their lives."[64] Adolescent health and well-being are also instrumental in health outcomes over the lifespan, affecting education, economic and social participation. Investment in youth health and well-being pays significant dividends for the health of this and future generations. [65]

Health and well-being are fundamental to active participation and facilitate access to other resources during settlement. Research shows that physical and mental health are strong determinants of cognitive development and academic achievement among young people, paving the way for long-term participation and engagement.[66] By contrast, young people who experience health issues are more likely to experience poorer outcomes in other domains, such as employment, social and civic participation.[67]

Almost all areas of our social and physical world impact upon our health and well-being, from our genes and the environment we live in, to who we are friends with, what we watch on television, our social and cultural capital, financial resources and the legal and social structures in place in our community. In a paper exploring the predictors of well-being among refugee youth in Melbourne, previous schooling, self-esteem, moving house in the previous year, a stronger ethnic identity, perceived discrimination and a supportive social environment were all identified as significant predictors of subjective health status over time (after adjusting for demographic and pre-migration factors).[68]

The National Youth Settlement Framework identifies seven indicators of personal well-being for young people settling in Australia. These include:

- positive relationships
- positive self-esteem
- positive physical, mental and sexual health
- goals for the future and understanding of pathways
- well-developed life skills
- positive intergenerational relationships.

Civic Participation

Civic participation and citizenship have been described as closely related concepts that are essential settlement goals as well as measures of successful integration.[69] A distinction, however, is made between formal citizenship or formal state membership (citizenship), and substantive citizenship (civic participation) – the latter incorporating both rights and participation, in particular, the ability to exercise political, civil and social rights.[70] This description draws on Valtonen's conceptual approach to settlement, which emphasises that formal citizenship is not a sufficient condition for substantive citizenship. Civic participation also goes beyond the socioeconomic conditions of settling in (e.g. housing, education, etc.) to "touch upon ideas of power and agency", including how newly arrived refugees and migrants engage as active agents of change in shaping their future.[71]

Young people's active participation in the civic sphere contributes to improvements in policies and services, which in turn has positive benefits for society, and is vital to community functioning in a modern democracy. Leaving young people out of the equation is antithetical. It is incumbent upon politicians, civil society leaders and community organisers to explore both barriers to participation and new ways and channels young people are adopting to engage in civic life, to identify how we can better promote youth civic participation in Australia. As the authors of a recent study of global youth health and well-being have summarised:

> *"Social networking and digital media make it possible to access information, communicate, and mobilise with other advocates as well as draw in resources in unprecedented ways. New media promote more active engagement as adolescents and young adults can independently generate their own content. These possibilities allow broader collaboration which in turn can generate political leverage. Time, privacy, and the need to convince adolescents that their voices will be heard remain barriers. For these reasons capitalising on these new possibilities is likely to require a shift in approaches to communication for both government and civil society organisations."*[72]

To provide adequate support for refugee and migrant youth participation we need to continually reflect on how we understand and measure their civic participation. The National Youth Settlement Framework recognises that full and equal participation in Australian society requires an understanding of Australia's legal, political and civic rights and responsibilities, as well as participation in formal and informal civic activities, such as volunteering.

Social Participation

Social participation is not only important for personal development, health and well-being it also influences economic and civic engagement, as social relationships and networks can facilitate access to knowledge, resources and opportunities. Social participation can also strengthen community networks and relationships, with social links within and between groups promoting connectedness and social cohesion.[73] "A person's ability to access and mobilise resources that reside in social relationships" is referred to as social capital.[74]

The experience of migration can fragment valuable social resources for young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds that may have once been available through networks of family, friends and community members in countries of origin. Social connections have been identified as a pivotal link between the facilitators and foundational elements of successful settlement, such as rights and language skills, with the achievement of significant markers of settlement, such as employment.[75]

CMY have previously reported on how different types of social capital promote refugee and migrant youth settlement:

> *"Social capital has been defined as being made up of bonding, bridging and linking capital (Putnam, 2000; Ager & Strang, 2008). Bonding capital is thought to exist amongst social relationships of similar people, promoting reciprocity, support and solidarity (Putnam, 2000). In contrast, bridging capital amongst people of dissimilar backgrounds are useful for connecting with external information and resources, creating broader social identities and reciprocity as we get to know those different to us (Putnam, 2000). Bonding social capital has been referred to as helpful for 'getting by', whereas bridging capital is essential in 'getting ahead' (de Souza Briggs, 1998 in Putnam, 2000). Linking capital is about the connection between people and institutions, such as government and services (Ager & Strang, 2008)."*[76]

The National Youth Settlement Framework recognises the importance of social capital to settlement and the potential constraints to social participation that young people may face when settling in Australia. The Framework includes four indicators in this domain: positive peer networks, bridging and bonding networks, freedom from racism and discrimination (or ability to manage experiences of racism or discrimination), and participation in community life.

6 Methodology

This investigation aimed to better understand how young people settling in Victoria are faring.

We set out to use the National Youth Settlement Framework as a tool for capturing a snapshot of the settlement outcomes of young people in Victoria. We were also interested to hear from young people who had settled in the last ten years about what had helped them settle in and achieve their goals and what had got in the way.

We undertook a mixed methods approach to looking at the settlement outcomes for young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds in Victoria, which included a survey and group consultations.

A survey was designed using the National Youth Settlement Framework indicators as a guide for measuring outcomes and for understanding variables impacting on the settlement of young people in Victoria. The survey included broad questions about young peoples' settlement outcomes, questions about young people's experiences of life in Australia during their first five years' post-arrival, and a series of demographic questions.

We promoted the survey to young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds aged between 16 and 30 years, who currently reside in Victoria. Broadening the age of participants allowed us to include the reflections of individuals who had arrived in Victoria during the last ten years as young people (aged 15 to 25 years). The survey was available in English only, both in hardcopy and online, and was promoted through youth services and youth networks, and via social media. Survey respondents were invited to go into the draw to receive a $200 gift voucher as an incentive for their participation.

We also undertook three group consultations using the World Café method with youth facilitators guiding discussion and note-taking for each session. We chose this method for its simple, effective and flexible format for supporting group dialogue. Consultations involved small group conversations held in rounds and guided by specific questions related to each of the four domains of the National Youth Settlement Framework.

After each round, groups shared insights from their conversations with the rest of the large group. During the first consultation, in this 'report back' session ideas and insights were harvested to develop key statements under each domain. In the final round, participants were invited to vote on and comment on each of these key statements.

Notes from the consultations and transcriptions of recordings of youth facilitator de-briefing sessions were subsequently analysed to identify key themes.

6.1 Limitations

The number of survey respondents and consultation participants, while broadly representative of young people who have settled in Victoria over the last fifteen years are small (n=114 and n=21 respectively). The small number of respondents means that the findings are not generalisable to the entire population of young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds living in Victoria.

Survey limitations also included:

- the survey was distributed in English, requiring a reasonable level of English literacy or assistance to complete;
- the voluntary nature of the survey could have resulted in those more interested in the topic or engaged in the community being more likely to receive the survey and respond, potentially leading to a skewed sample group; and
- the demographic variables suggested that the survey included an overly large number of young people studying in higher education (this likely reflects the survey distribution method, which was much more successful among university networks).

During the consultations, participants identified that discussions of this nature often don't capture some young people's voices. These included young people who were:

- not confident in their English language skills,
- were less engaged in community activities,
- disengaged from study and work (or the converse, had limited time because of work and study commitments),
- had limited access to public transport, and
- more newly arrived young people, in particular, young women.

While we endeavoured to overcome some of these barriers to participation – such as hosting consultations in locations identified as most accessible to newly arrived young people and those from refugee and migrant backgrounds – this likely impacted upon the representativeness of our sample. Of particular note in this regard – consultation participants self-selected and were more likely to be representative of well-connected and engaged young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds.

7 Profile of participants

7.1 Survey respondents

A total of 114 young people (aged 16 – 30 years of age) completed the survey (mostly online, some via hard copy). However, not all young people answered all questions.

Gender (n=90) The majority of survey respondents (70 per cent) were female, less than one third (29.9 per cent) were male, and one respondent answered other.

Age (n=88) 6 per cent of respondents were under the age of 18, more than half (59 per cent) were aged 18 – 24 years and just over one third (34 per cent) were aged 25 – 30 years.

Length of time in Australia (n=89) Almost half (48.3 per cent) of the respondents had lived in Australia for less than five years (27 per cent less than two years and 21.3 per cent between two and five years). Over one third (37.1 per cent) of the respondents had lived in Australia between five and ten years. 13.5 per cent had lived in Australia between ten and 15 years, and just one had lived in Australia for over 15 years.

Countries of birth (n=88) Respondents were from 37 different countries of birth, with Afghanistan, China, Ethiopia, Iran, Malaysia, Philippines and Sri Lanka the top countries of birth (38 per cent of respondents were born in one of these seven countries.)

Cultural backgrounds (n=73) Respondents were from 48 self-identified different cultural backgrounds, spanning Asia, the Middle East, Europe, Africa, the Americas and the Pacific region.

Migration stream (n=90)

- Parent's or family's work (20.0 per cent)
- Parent's or family's education (12.2 per cent)
- My work (5.6 per cent)
- My education (56.7 per cent)
- To be with my family/partner (18.9 per cent)
- Humanitarian (refugee/asylum seeker) (21.1 per cent)
- Other (e.g. to have a better life) (11.1 per cent).

Education and employment (n=88) A high number of young respondents were still studying (87.5 per cent) and almost one quarter (23.9 per cent) were looking for work. Just under half (45.4 per cent) were working (12.5 per cent full-time and 32.9 per cent part-time or casual) and 4.6 per cent were looking for work and not working or studying. One fifth (19.3 per cent) were volunteering.

Level of education (n=89) A small number (6 per cent) of respondents were still completing high school. None had left school before completing year 12, and more than half (61 per cent) had finished a tertiary level qualification (13 per cent had a diploma or certificate, 35 per cent had a university degree, and 12 per cent had a postgraduate degree).

7.2 Consultation participants

A total of 21 young people (aged 17 to 30 years of age) participated in three consultation sessions, with one each held in the Melbourne CBD, Dandenong and Carlton. Six young people carried out the role of co-facilitators, hosting the consultation workshops in a World Café style.

Gender The majority of consultation participants (61.9 per cent) were female while just over a third (38.1 per cent) were male.

Age Consultation participants were aged between 17 and 30 years.

Length of time in Australia About half of the participants had spent most of their life (more than ten years) in Australia, while only two had lived in Australia for less than two years.

Cultural backgrounds Respondents were from more than 16 different cultural backgrounds, including Sudanese, Vietnamese, Indonesian, New Zealander, Spanish, Macedonian, Ethiopian, Albanian, Afghan, Chinese and Sierra Leonean.

8 Discussion of findings

8.1 Measuring settlement outcomes – active citizenship

"Good youth settlement is understood as active citizenship, where young people are supported to become active and engaged members of Australian society."[77] This includes the development of a sense of agency and belonging to a new community and achieving a measure of social and cultural capital necessary to participate fully and equally in society. Realising this involves a complicated series of negotiations and adjustments as refugees and migrants seeking to establish themselves in their new country and become "part of the social, institutional and cultural fabric of a society".[78]

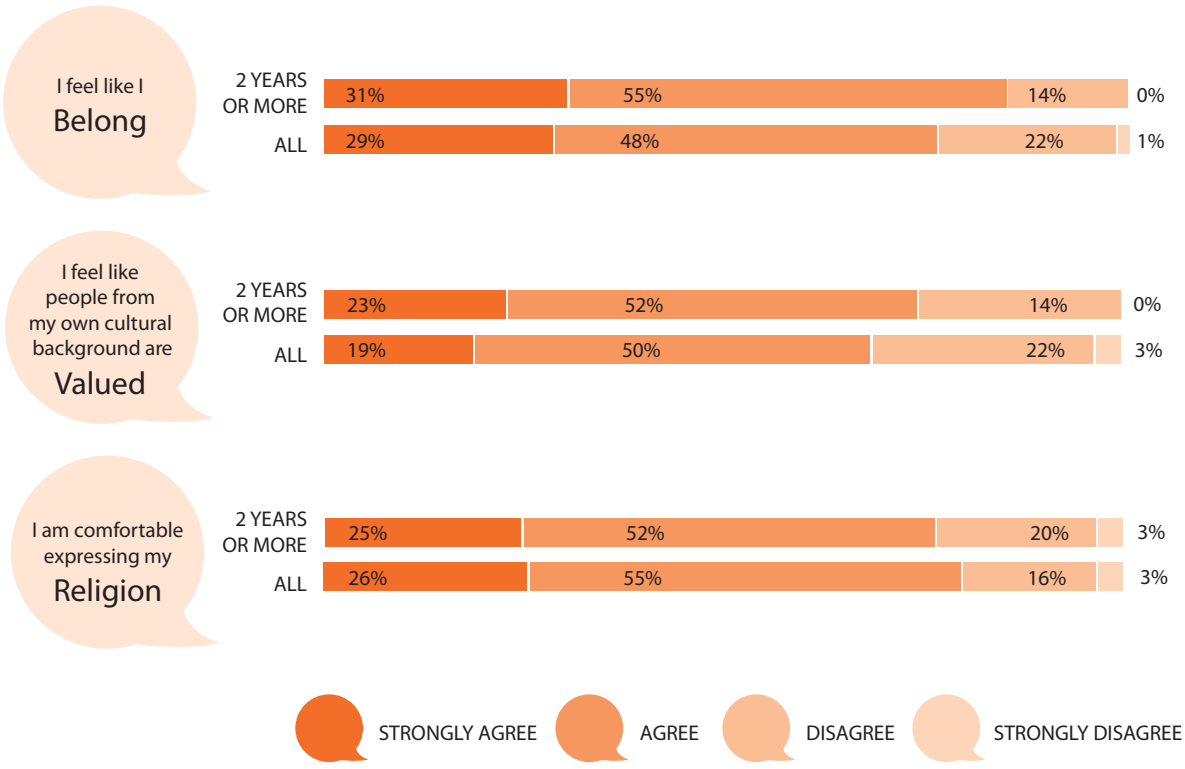
In the following section, we use the settlement outcomes markers identified in the National Youth Settlement Framework to explore how young people settling in Victoria are faring. Findings in this section draw on the results from the survey as well as consultations with young people.

> *"It was really cool to hear that people are on different stages of that journey (to settling in) – that some people are just starting and some people have already experienced it and it is amazing to see how far people will go." - Female, 23 years old, Vietnamese-Chinese, lived in Australia for more than ten years*

8.11 How are young people settling in Victoria faring?

The majority of young people we surveyed reported that they are doing well against the ten markers of active citizenship we used to measure youth settlement outcomes. These outcomes markers included confidence to navigate multi-cultural identity, sense of belonging, freedom to engage in cultural and religious expression, understanding of Australian culture and society, and access to and capacity to navigate a range of services.

The markers against which young people reported poorer outcomes related to a sense of belonging. The highest number of respondents indicated that they do not feel like they belong in Australia, that people from their own (or similar) cultural backgrounds are not valued in Australia, and that they are not comfortable to express their religion.



Housing instability and mental health were the two variables that had the most significant negative impact on settlement outcomes among survey respondents. These respondents were more likely not to feel confident to balance the differences between the cultures they belong to or to achieve their goals for the future. Respondents who reported that they had experienced housing instability were also twice as likely to say that they did not feel like they belong in Australia. Young people who reported poor mental health during their first five years were more likely to feel as though people from their own (or similar) cultural backgrounds are not valued in Australia.

Poor physical health during the first five years in Australia, as well as poor engagement with education and difficulties finding work, were also associated with poorer outcomes across all ten active citizenship measures used in the survey. Young people also reported poorer settlement outcomes if they did not have friends from different backgrounds who were there for them during their first five years in Australia and if they did not have someone to go to from their own (or similar) cultural community for help when they needed it.

Having goals for the future and feeling confident to achieve these speak to a young person's sense of agency, self-esteem and well-being.[79] "Building a sense of efficacy can lead to active participation in groups and a development of trust between members of those groups."[80]Having goals for the future is also equally as important as having the skills, confidence and knowledge to access and negotiate pathways to achieving these. For young people settling in Australia, support for goal-setting requires "identifying, valuing and building on young people's strengths and capabilities" and involving them in decision making, within the family and community context.[81]

Of the young people we surveyed, 88.5 per cent agreed with the statement 'I feel confident I can achieve the goals I have for the future'. The one in ten young people who did not agree with this statement also reported negative or poor outcomes across most indicators in each settlement domain during their first five years in Australia. Young people from the family migration stream were more likely to feel confident to achieve the goals they have for the future (91.9 per cent) followed by skilled (86.5 per cent) and humanitarian (81.1 per cent) entrants.

"The thing that was most important to me was my career... I studied so hard to achieve this goal, I was struggling a bit with understanding of terminology and method of study but then my teacher's assistance - I got better and achieved my goal."

- Female, 18 years old, Oromo, has lived in Australia for five to ten years

Comparison of settlement outcomes	Fatima ~ 18 years old, female, identifies as Oromo from Ethiopia Arrived in Australia at age 10 as a recognised refugee	Zara ~ 20 years old, female, identifies as Oromo from Ethiopia Arrived in Australia at age 18 as a recognised refugee	Ali ~ 22 years old, male, identifies as Hazara from AfghanistanArrived in Australia at age 20 as an asylum seeker	Arif ~ 17 years old, male, identifies as Afghan from Iran Arrived in Australia at age 14 as an asylum seeker
I feel like I belong in more than one culture	Agree	Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I feel confident to balance the differences between the cultures I belong to	Strongly Agree	Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I feel like I belong in Australia	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Agree
I feel like people from my own (or similar) cultural backgrounds are valued in Australia	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Agree
I am comfortable expressing my cultural heritage in Australia	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Strongly Agree
I am comfortable expressing my religion in Australia	Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Agree
I understand Australian culture and society	Strongly Agree	Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I feel like I am contributing to Australian society	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I feel confident to use services and systems in Australia to meet my needs	Strongly Agree	Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I feel confident I can achieve the goals I have for the future	Agree	Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Agree
My physical health	Very Good	Good	Very Good	Very Good
My mental health	Good	Poor	OK	Very Good
My English language skills	Good	OK	Very Good	Very Good
My engagement with education	Very Good	OK	Good	Very Good
My relationship with my family	Very Good	OK	Good	Very Good
My understanding of my rights and the law	Very Good	Good	OK	Very Good
Finding work	Easy	Very Difficult	Difficult	Difficult
Finding opportunities to volunteer	Easy	OK	Difficult	Easy
I had a safe and stable place to live	Always	Most of the time	Always	Most of the time
I had enough money to pay for the things I needed	Most of the time	Sometimes	Sometimes	Sometimes
I had friends from my own (or a similar) cultural background who were there for me when I needed them	Always	Most of the time	Sometimes	Always
I had friends from different cultural backgrounds to me who were there for me when I needed them	Always	Sometimes	Sometimes	Always
I had someone to go to from my own (or a similar) cultural background when I needed help	Always	Rarely	Sometimes	Always
I had someone to go to from different cultural backgrounds to me when I needed help	Always	Sometimes	Sometimes	Always
I experienced discrimination (was treated unfairly because of my age, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexuality, disability or other personal characteristics)	Rarely	Sometimes	Sometimes	Rarely
I participated in community life (for example sports, music or community/cultural events)	Most of the time	Most of the time	Rarely	Always

8.1.2 Navigation of multi-cultural identity

One of the key markers of active citizenship identified in the Framework is a young person's ability and confidence to navigate multi-cultural identity. Identity exploration and formation are important developmental tasks of adolescence that support the development of a multifaceted identity and holistic sense of belonging. However, successfully balancing multiple cultural identities requires particular skills for navigating different (and often competing) cultural values and norms. This is a challenging and complex task that young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds must navigate while they negotiate the other challenges of settlement and adolescence.

To gauge whether navigating multi-cultural identity was something the young people we consulted were managing, we first asked the young people we surveyed if they felt like they belong in more than one culture. Most (88.6 per cent) respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement 'I feel like I belong in more than one culture'. To explore how young people were going in terms of balancing or navigating the multiple cultures they felt they belonged to, we then asked young people if they felt confident to balance the differences between the cultures they belong to. Of those who agreed that they felt they belonged to more than one culture, 88.0 per cent agreed or strongly agreed with the statement 'I feel confident to balance the differences between the cultures I belong to'.

Interestingly, survey respondents who experienced housing instability or who reported having a poor understanding of their rights and the law during their first five years in Australia was also less likely to feel like they belong in more than one culture. Those respondents who reported greater difficulty balancing the differences between the cultures they belong to were more likely to have experienced housing and income insecurity, poor mental and physical health, difficulties finding work, and challenges finding someone they could go to for help during their first five years in Australia.

Developing a strong sense of identity, regardless of how it is constructed or how it might change over time, was recognised by consultation participants as fundamental to feeling settled. Strong connections with family, culture and countries of origin, as well as positive relationships with peers and those in the wider community, are all recognised to support young people to navigate multi-cultural identity.[82] However, young people described identity formation during settlement as a balancing act that required navigating the expectations and values of family, and often cultural or religious communities, as well as those of friends and the wider Australian community. This was described as an intensely challenging experience that was different for each young person.

Most young people described feeling a sense of pressure, either from family or themselves, to attain English language proficiency. For a number of the participants however, achievement of this goal was often overshadowed by subsequent parental or community disappointment in a (perceived or actual) loss of their 'mother tongue'.

Similar experiences were shared about navigating different and sometimes conflicting, cultural values, practices and beliefs. While young people were required to 'fit in' at school and work as per Australian cultural norms, many also want to respect and maintain the culture of their family and country or community of origin. Many young people described feeling like they were often required to choose one over the other, rather than being supported to navigate a path that allowed them to be both.

Negative public attitudes and media towards their religious, ethnic or cultural community practices and beliefs was a significant factor influencing cultural identity. Young people described how negative portrayals of their culture could either make young people defensive and draw them in closer to their cultural communities, or this could push them away from their community altogether. One young person described how the latter had been the experience for his friend, who then suffered

disappointment, conflict and even exclusion from family and community members because he was seen to be rejecting his culture.

> *"After you accept yourself and you are very comfortable with who you are, you don't really care what other people think. You are kind of on a mission to teach them to accept you, more than the fact of getting hurt (by) them not accepting you. So, I am like always trying to educate people now to just accept everyone for who they are. Like, everyone is different, but we can all come to one place and share the same ideas."*
>
> - Female, 19 years old, South Sudanese, has lived in Australia more than ten years

Young people believe that when you get this right, you have a strong sense of identity and confidence that allows you to find this balance – but this takes time. Overall, in addition to the family and cultural or religious communities, friends who shared similar experiences of navigating multi-cultural identity were recognised as critical to feeling confident and developing a sense of belonging. Negative public attitudes and misrepresentations of religion, culture or ethnic communities were a key barrier to feeling settled. When coupled with the often-contrasting values and ideas of family and friends, negative representations had the potential to result in some young people continually questioning whether there was anywhere that they really 'fit in'.

Name & About	First five years	Now
Farzaneh, 26 years old, from Iran Farzaneh is Persian and came to Australia almost five years ago to undertake her post-graduate studies. Farzaneh does not have any close family with her in Australia and works part-time to support herself through her study.	During her first couple of years in Australia Farzaneh found it very difficult to find part-time work to support herself. Sometimes Farzaneh did not have a stable place to live and she often found herself without the money to pay for things she needed. Farzaneh also faced significant discrimination. Despite moving to Australia without her family, during her first five years Farzaneh said that most of the time she had someone to turn to for help when she needed it. Farzaneh experienced poor mental health during her early settlement but felt she understood her rights and was confident to access the services she needed.	*Farzaneh feels like she belongs in more than one culture but finds it very difficult to balance the differences between the cultures she identifies with.* *Farzaneh thinks people from her cultural background are not valued in Australia. While Farzaneh feels comfortable expressing her cultural heritage in Australia, she is not comfortable expressing her religion.* *Farzaneh says she feels like she is contributing to Australian society and is confident to achieve the goals she has for the future.* *"Having friends (both from my country and other countries) helped me the most in different aspects of life from finding a place (to live) to finding a job."*

8.1.3 Sense of belonging in Australian society

The desire to belong is a "powerful, fundamental, and extremely pervasive motivation" that centres on the importance of relationships to the human experience.[83] A sense of belonging has been defined as the perception of being "indispensable and of value to a social system, and of being a recognised and accepted member of that community".[84]

In their 2008 paper outlining a conceptual framework for understanding integration, forced migration and community development, researchers Alastair Ager and Alison Strang reported that refugee communities identified "'belonging' as the ultimate mark of living in an integrated community".[85] Belonging encompasses links with family, committed friendships and a sense of respect and shared values within a diverse society.[86]

A sense of belonging amongst family members, peers, own cultural community and the broader Australian community is linked to positive settlement for young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds in Victoria.[87] A sense of belonging also produces substantial benefits for the wider Australian community and is "a crucial measurement of the depth and vigour of multiculturalism within Victoria".[88]

77.2 per cent of the young people we surveyed reported that they feel like they belong in Australia. This compares to more than 90% of respondents aged 18 to 24 years in the Scanlon Foundation's Mapping Social Cohesion Surveys indicating a sense of belonging in Australia to a 'great' or 'moderate' extent.[89] This difference may be a result of the inclusion of students and other temporary visa holders in our survey – with young people who had been in Australia for two years or less twice as likely to report that they do not feel like they belong. If we count only those who have lived in Australia for two years or more, 86.2 per cent of our survey respondents agree with the statement 'I feel like I belong in Australia' and we see a sense of belonging increase with length of time in Australia.

Survey respondents who disagreed with the statement 'I feel like I belong in Australia' were more likely to have experienced housing and income insecurity, poor mental and physical health, difficulties finding work, discrimination, challenges finding someone they could go to for help and were less likely to have had friends from different cultural backgrounds who were there for them during their first five years in Australia. This reflects research from Victoria that shows people with a "low income, psychological distress or lower self-reported health are less likely to report feeling valued by society". [90]

We also asked survey respondents if they feel as though they are contributing to Australian society. 85.1 per cent of the young people we surveyed agreed with the statement 'I feel like I am contributing to Australian society'. This figure varied very little when we adjusted for length of time in Australia – 87.7 per cent of respondents who had lived in Australia for two years or longer agreed. No respondents who entered Australia through the humanitarian program disagreed with this statement. This compares to 16.2 per cent of all respondents who came via the Family Programme and 22.7 per cent of respondents from the Skilled Programme.

A sense of belonging for young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds is fostered by opportunities that enable them to participate meaningfully in society. However, environmental or socio-political factors can also create "a challenging set of conditions for newly arrived young people to feel welcome in their new home".[91] While most young people we consulted felt valued and welcome in Australia, there remained particular places and spaces where they felt more welcome and accepted than others.

Feeling welcome and valued was commonly linked to the level of diversity within an area or group, suggesting places with greater diversity invite a greater sense of belonging and acceptance in Australia among those we consulted. Belonging and sense of safety were also linked by consultation participants. For example, young people reported feeling excluded from or unsafe to engage in conversations or

spaces that they felt were more likely not to uphold the freedoms and values of respect for diversity that Australia espouses.

Consultation participants also talked about how a sense of belonging could be called into question at any moment by the behaviour and attitudes of others. For example, with comments like 'I know you grew up in Australia, but where are you really from?'. As one participant described:

> *"What surprised me was that the sense of belonging for a lot of young people, for a lot of us who have pretty much grown up here, that that is an issue. It is not just for those who are newly arrived. I think that this really needs to be looked at, to work with that group (who have grown up in Australia) too."*
>
> - Female, 21 years old, Afghan/Argentinian, has lived in Australia for more than 15 years

An important factor contributing to a sense of belonging and well-being during settlement is how young people feel their families and communities are perceived by the broader Australian community. A study with newly arrived young people from refugee backgrounds settling in Melbourne found that "youth with lower subjective social status of their families in the wider community report lower wellbeing in the first three years of settlement."[92]

69.3 per cent of the young people we surveyed felt that people from their own or similar cultural backgrounds are valued in Australia. Again, this result increased with length of time in Australia, with 75.4 per cent of those who have lived in Australia for two years or more agreeing with the statement 'I feel like people from my own (or similar) cultural backgrounds are valued in Australia'. Survey respondents who had lived in Australia for two years or more and were settling in Australia through the Humanitarian Programme were also more likely to agree with this statement – 84.6 per cent compared to 69.2 per cent of family and 75.0 per cent of Skilled Programme migrants.

Survey respondents were more likely to disagree with this statement if they reported that during their first five years in Australia they did not have someone to go to when they needed help, had a poor relationship with their family and/or were less likely to have had friends who there for them.

Consultation participants described wider community acceptance and a sense of welcome as influential on their feeling a sense of belonging in Australia. While belonging was described by some participants as a two-way process equally dependent on the broader Australian community, a number of participants said they often felt they were the ones who had to 'adjust' to others in order to feel accepted.

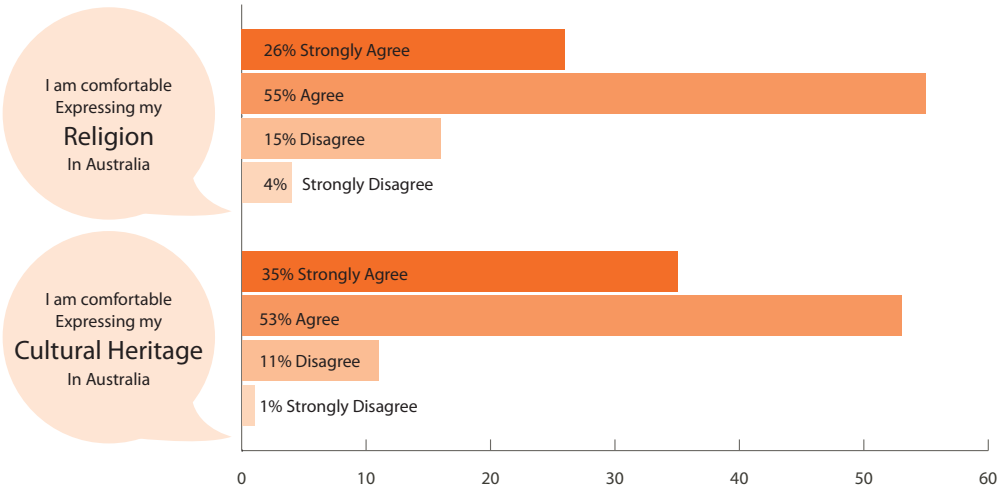
Name & About	First five years	Now
Aya, 23 years old, from Sri Lanka Aya came to Australia almost eight years ago with her family through Australia's refugee resettlement program. Aya says she has very good English and recently Aya graduated from university with a bachelor's degree. Aya is currently looking for work.	• During her first five years in Australia Aya attended high school where she found supportive staff that were "diverse and who had culturally appropriate training". Despite this support Aya found it difficult to engage in her education while also managing all the other demands of settlement. • Aya also experienced discrimination when she first arrived in Australia and found it difficult to make friends - she says she rarely had friends who were there for her when she needed them during this period. • Aya and her family also experienced some housing instability during their first five years in Australia and often did not have enough money to pay for the things they needed. Aya found it difficult to find work and volunteer opportunities and infrequently participated in community life. • Aya experienced poor mental health during her first five years in Australia and faced some challenges in her relationship with her family during this period.	• Aya feels like she belongs in more than one culture but does not feel confident to balance the difference between the cultures to which she belongs. Aya does not feel that people from her own cultural background are valued in Australia and is not comfortable expressing her culture or religion in Australia. • Aya understands Australian culture and society and feels strongly that she is contributing to Australia. However, Aya says she does not feel confident she can achieve the goals she has for the future. • Aya does not feel like she belongs in Australia. *"Many people categorising me and others depending on what community I come from and recommending me things which are not relevant… (and) not listening and understanding my needs, concerns and wants".*

8.1.4 Positive cultural and religious expression – free to engage with cultural/ religious expression

Freedom to express culture and religion are fundamental freedoms valued in Australia's modern democracy. Support for new arrivals to link into cultural and religious communities facilitates cultural and religious expression, with ethnic communities and family being important resources for young people's well-being and identity during settlement.[93] However, community attitudes and responses to the expression of culture and religion are equally influential. Feeling respected and valued, not just tolerated, is significant for developing a sense of belonging and connection in a new country.

87.7 per cent of the young people we surveyed agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, 'I feel comfortable expressing my cultural heritage in Australia'. 80.5 per cent of the young people we surveyed agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, 'I feel comfortable expressing my religion in Australia'. Level of comfort in expressing culture and religion was associated with a sense of belonging in Australia. The percentage of those who reported they did not feel comfortable expressing their culture or religion was higher among respondents who reported that they did not feel like they belong in Australia.

Image: Respondents who have lived in Australia for two or more years by sense of belonging response.



Survey respondents were more likely not to feel comfortable expressing their religion or culture in Australia if they reported that during their first five years in Australia they had experienced: poor mental health, poor engagement in education, poor understanding of their rights and the law, income and housing insecurity, discrimination, limited participation in community life, and were also less likely to have had someone from their own cultural community who they could go for help if they needed it.

Those who disagreed with the statement 'I feel comfortable expressing my culture in Australia' were also more likely to have reported that during their first five years in Australia they had experienced poor physical health, difficulties finding work and were less likely to have had friends who were available to them. Survey respondents who were more likely to disagree with the statement 'I feel comfortable expressing my religion in Australia' were also more likely to have had a poor relationship with their family during their first five years in Australia.

Almost one in five (19.5 per cent) survey of participants disagreed with the statement 'I feel comfortable expressing my religion in Australia.' Of these respondents, 31.8 per cent identified as Muslim, 13.6 per cent as Christian, 9.1 per cent as Buddhist, 4.5 per cent as Hindu and 40.9 per cent did not provide a respond.

What got in the way of you achieving your goals when settling in Australia?

"Stigma with being a Muslim."

- Female, 20 years old, Hazara, has lived in Australia for ten years

In both survey and consultation responses, young people described how public perceptions and stereotypes, fuelled by media, about religion could be a significant barrier to a sense of belonging. Participants reported that the misrepresentation of minority cultural and religious communities in the media and public debate was confronting. However, most felt safe and comfortable to practice their religion and culture in Australia. One participant highlighted one of the more significant unintended consequences of a persistent negative public attention on particular communities in Australia. As this young person explains, overwhelming negative attention and stereotypes can make it difficult for young people to speak up about what they are going through and seek help:

"There is this idea that somehow because I feel isolated and not sure of who I am when I am trying to explore my religion and culture that this somehow means I am vulnerable to being a terrorist."

- Male, 26 years old, Hazara, has lived in Australia for more than five years

Name & About	First five years	Now
Jessie, 20 years old from China Jessie moved to Australia to join her family between five and ten years ago. Jessie has completed Year 12 and is currently studying at university, volunteering and working part-time in Melbourne.	• During her first five years in Australia Jessie struggled to learn the language, although she says she received a lot of help from her teachers. • Jessie experienced challenges finding work when she first arrived and says she had a poor understanding of her rights and the law. She also experienced discrimination and racism. • Jessie's relationship with her family and cultural community was stressed during settlement. Despite these experiences, Jessie participated in community life and always had friends from different cultural backgrounds who were there for her when she needed them.	• Today, Jessie thinks people from her own cultural background are valued in Australia but she does not feel confident to balance the differences between the cultures she belongs to. Jessie says she feels uncomfortable expressing her cultural heritage and religion in Australia. ***"It was difficult when not everyone in school was being inclusive. We want an inclusive Australia, or else we can't claim ourselves as one of the most (successful) multicultural nations in the world."***

8.1.5 Understanding Australian culture and society

Understanding of Australian culture and society refers to the attainment of forms of knowledge about Australian life and community that facilitates access to opportunities, resources, networks and information necessary to participate fully and equally in Australian society.

- Social capital refers to the access to and capacity to mobilise resources of social networks.[94]
- Cultural capital refers to the knowledge, skills, tastes and behaviours or mannerisms practised to be an active member of a social context – "(it is) the convertibility into other forms of capital (economic, social, symbolic) distinguishes mere cultural resources from cultural capital".[95]

Typically, the extent of a person's social capital is thought to be dependent on the size of their social network and on the degree of economic, cultural or symbolic capital these connections hold. Social capital can influence a person's ability to access and mobilise resources that reside in social relationships, contributing to their personal development and the attainment of personal goals.[96] Cultural competencies, activities and interests (cultural capital) are used as markers of success to indicate membership of a particular group (including class) that can open up opportunities, particularly in education and employment.[97]

Different communities may value and reproduce cultural knowledge and practices differently within the same society. However, the types of cultural resources, knowledge and networks that enable social mobility are typically defined (and given their value) by the more powerful or dominant members of a community. [98] Anthropologist and author, Ghassan Hage has described how in culturally plural societies majority ethnic groups typically determine which cultural competencies derive particular advantages, in both the economic and political fields.[99] Hage also suggests that a lack of familiarity and 'at-homeness' with cultural norms and practices in a new country may limit ethnic minority groups' or new arrivals' capacity to mobilise cultural knowledge and resources to support participation in important aspects of social, economic and civic life.[100]

Sociologist, Anthony Bourdieu, who first framed the concept of cultural capital, also developed the idea of habitus – which refers to the physical embodiment of cultural capital. Bourdieu argues that cultural capital is so ingrained through the process of socialisation that it becomes something people practice with little conscious thought – similar to a sports players 'feel for the game'.[101] According to Bourdieu, this creates the potential for the justification of social inequality. This is because the inherent nature of cultural capital can lead to the belief that some people are naturally disposed to understanding or performing these cultural competencies, activities and interests, compared to others. However, this ignores the fact that the value these cultural factors are assigned (and thus their capacity to be translated into other forms of capital) is socially (culturally) constructed.

In the survey, we found that 89.5 per cent of the young people agreed or strongly agreed with the statement 'I understand Australian culture and society'. The likelihood of disagreeing with this statement increased for those young people who also reported negative or poor outcomes across all indicators, in each domain, during their first five years in Australia with the exception of income insecurity and discrimination. Notably, all Humanitarian Programme entrants agreed or strongly agreed with the statement 'I understand Australian culture and society'.

Defining Australian cultural identity is a highly complex task for young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds who are required to identify and understand the value placed on diversity and negotiate many and varied social and cultural norms, customs and practices in an unfamiliar context. While social norms and practices were something consultation participants said they learned over time, many reported that they continued, years later, to struggle to grasp a complete understanding of or 'familiarity' with Australian culture. Young people also found it hard to articulate clearly what cultural and social practices, competencies and interests could be truly defined as 'typical' in the Australian community and how they were valued.

Participants reported that in their first few years in Australia they frequently experienced a feeling that they didn't quite 'get' everything, which could make them feel left out or inferior. For many this impacted upon their confidence particularly when engaging with peers and making friends. Examples of challenges faced by newly arrived young people included a limited understanding of social norms or rules around behaviours, practices and expectations in formal education or employment settings – such as ways to address elders or how to interact with people in positions of authority. Examples from social settings included understanding social norms and rules around gift giving, colloquial language and expression, and dating. As one young participant noted:

> *"Understanding friends speaking was difficult – such as sarcasm and casual conversation."*
>
> - Female, 18 years old, Japanese/Korean, has lived in Australia for five years

Another observation related to cultural adjustment and understanding of Australian society was that this can be different for each young person and may be influenced by length of time in Australia, age, gender, level of English language proficiency and a range of other factors. As one young participant described:

"The biggest challenge in front of the young women is the environment and their social and cultural integration. Because they are coming from a cultural background that is totally different to that here in Australia… The girls you are seeing around now, they are totally different to the ladies and girls who came through by boat or maybe sponsored by their family. Those who have grown up (in Australia), they're the least number who live in Australia (from this emerging community), and they are totally Australian really. But the majority of them (women from this community), they are actually inside their houses… We need to go through some steps to encourage them to get out of the home…"

- Male, 26 years old, Hazara, has lived in Australia for more than five years

Name & About	First five years	Now
Rosa, 22 years old from the Philippines. Rosa came to Australia more than five years ago to study. Rosa now has a university degree but is back studying to improve her chances of getting into her chosen profession. Rosa also works part-time and volunteers.	• Rosa found adjusting to the new culture and lifestyle very challenging when she settled in Victoria, especially as she was just a teenager and she had limited English language skills. • While Rosa found work in Australia easily and was actively engaged in her studies she experienced significant racism and discrimination during her early settlement period. During her first five years in Australia, while Rosa says she always had someone to go to for help when she needed it, she found it difficult to make friends with people outside her cultural community. • Rosa also experienced poor mental health during her first five years in Australia and sometimes she did not have enough money to pay for the things she needed.	• While Rosa feels like she belongs in Australia and is confident to express her culture and religion, she does not feel like people from her cultural background are valued in Australia. • Rosa feels strongly that she is contributing to Australian society and is confident to access the services and supports she requires to meet her needs. • Despite this, Rosa does not feel confident that she understands Australian culture and society. *"Adjusting to a whole new culture and lifestyle, especially in your teenage years, made realising goals more challenging."*

8.1.6 Access to and capacity to navigate a range of services

Many new arrivals, particularly those from refugee backgrounds, have limited or no culturally and contextually distributed forms of knowledge essential to daily living. This includes information about how to rent a house, catch public transport, apply for a job, grocery shop, pay bills, participate in a Western-based education and employment system, and engage with government services, banks and real estate agents.[102]

A central component of Australia's on arrival humanitarian settlement support service is ensuring humanitarian arrivals are linked in to and receive information and guidance on accessing mainstream services and supports.[103] However, these humanitarian settlement services are not available to most young people settling in Victoria each year – just 15 per cent of all young people permanently settling in 2015/16 entered through the Humanitarian Programme and were eligible to receive this additional settlement support.[104]

Young people who do not arrive via the Humanitarian Programme rely on other services and touchpoints they come into contact with before and soon after their arrival in Australia to learn about available supports and services. This includes the local, state and federal Government services like Centrelink, local council services, health and education providers, as well as settlement grants program providers. Employers and community services are also valuable resources for newly arrived young people to access information and learn how to navigate services and supports. New arrivals also draw on networks of family and friends already living in Australia to learn about services, as well as

community (including cultural, ethnic or religious) organisations and their resources (such as digital skills and English language proficiency) to find relevant information.

93.0 per cent of the young people we surveyed agreed or strongly agreed with the statement 'I feel confident to use services and supports in Australia to meet my needs'. Respondents were at least twice as likely to have disagreed with this statement if they had experienced poor engagement with education, challenges in their family relationships or limited understanding of their rights and the law during their first five years in Australia. They were also likely to disagree if they did not have friends or others from the same background they could go to if they needed them. In contrast, factors that appeared to impact positively on access to and engagement with services included a stable income, support from people of different backgrounds and English language proficiency.

When we spoke to young people about the things that most helped or hindered their settlement in their first five years in Australia a key factor raised was the importance of having their basic needs met. Young people highlighted how experiences of socioeconomic disadvantage, such an inability to find stable housing or work, could act as a critical barrier to young people feeling settled and able to pursue the goals they have for the future. Conversely, knowledge of service systems and structures, and how to negotiate these, made young people feel supported and reassured to navigate obstacles during settlement.

Participants identified a some additional factors that negatively impact upon young people's service utilisation during settlement. These included a lack of knowledge and awareness of the services and supports available, inadequate information or resources to enable them to draw on services, and previous negative experiences with services and service representatives.

An essential source of knowledge about services for the young people we spoke to were social media networks. This included informal networks, such as peers, family and community, as well as formal networks, such as education providers or servics.

Name & About	First five years	Now
Sam, 19 years old from Ethiopia. Sam is Oromo and moved to Australia with his family less than two years ago through Australia's humanitarian settlement program. Sam completed high school in Dadaab Refugee Camp and is currently studying at TAFE. Rosa came to Australia more than five years ago to study. Rosa now has a university degree but is back studying to improve her chances of getting into her chosen profession. Rosa also works part-time and volunteers.	• Sam says he arrived in Australia with low English language proficiency. As a humanitarian entrant, Sam and his family received on-arrival housing and support to link in to key services. Sam was also quickly linked in to an English language class for young people. • While Sam worked hard at school his family sometimes struggled to pay for the things they needed, so he had to find a job. • Sam found it very difficult to find part-time work that allowed him to continue his English classes, and sometimes experienced discrimination and racism. He says he had a poor understanding of his rights and, even with the support of his settlement caseworker, had trouble finding volunteer opportunities to build his local skills and experience. • Sam is now back studying at TAFE and hopes to find work once he has a local qualification. • Sam has a very strong relationship with his family, but with work and school has had very little time to participate in local community activities – he says he has found it hard to make friends. Sam says he doesn't really have anyone to go to outside of his own community for help when he needs it.	• Sam feels like he belongs in Australia that he is confident to express his cultural heritage and religion, and he says he is managing to navigate different cultures as he settles in to life in Australia. • While Sam still struggles to understand Australian culture and society, he says that the support he received when he first arrived makes him feel confident to access the services and systems he requires in Australia to meet his needs. • Sam feels confident he can achieve the goals he has for the future. *"The thing that helped me the most in achieving what is important to me when settling in Australia? That was the support of my family and the help of (settlement) services."*

8.2 What are young people saying about what is working and what could be improved?

The National Youth Settlement Framework describes a range of indicators across the four settlement domains as critical for supporting young people to become active and engaged members of Australian society – or active citizens. To measure young people's settlement outcomes we wanted to understand how participants experienced factors known to impact upon youth settlement during their first five years in Australia. This included identified settlement indicators such as housing, education and participation in community life.

In the following section we report on young people's experiences of settlement during their first five years in Australia. Alongside an examination of the survey open-ended question responses and consultation findings we explore what young people believe working well to support youth settlement and what could be improved. This includes exploration of personal factors, the role of individuals, organisations, programs and supports, as well as structural and systemic factors. We have also included, where available, recommendations from participants on addressing gaps or issues they have identified.

"(What helped me settle was) support networks in school that had staff who were diverse and who had culturally appropriate training."

- Female, Australian / Sri Lankan / New Zealand, has lived in Australia for ten to fifteen years

8.2.1 Economic Participation

Economic participation refers to participation in economic activities that "contribute directly or indirectly to the well-being (or the standard of living) of particular groups of individuals or of society as a whole".[105] Economic participation has significant and long-term benefits for young people, their families and communities, and for a diverse, socially cohesive Australia.[106]

Acquiring English language skills

English language ability is a valuable tool facilitating engagement and participation in Australian society. Acquiring English language skills supports young peoples' navigation of and access to services and opportunities, engagement in education and employment, participation in social and recreational activities, and enables them to exercise their rights and responsibilities.

What's happening?

83.5 per cent of survey respondents rated their English language skills in the first five years in Australia as good or very good.

What's working?

- A safe and supportive learning environment
- Support of family, social networks and friends to build language skills outside education context
- Targeted support to build their English language skills.

What's not working?

- Bullying, more prevalent in mainstream educational contexts
- Support based on age rather than level of education / need.

Where to from here?

Additional support for older arrivals, those with disrupted schooling, and for all young people entering higher education.

Engaged in pathways towards employment, including education/training

Greater health, social and economic outcomes have been linked to educational attainment, and it is positive to see that more and more young Australians are staying in education longer.[107] Educational settings are also an important place for young people to build networks and learn about life in Australia. Learning a new language, adjusting to a new education and training system and styles of learning, as well as having limited knowledge of Australian educational pathways and available supports, can be additional stressors for young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds that can result in poor education and training outcomes or even disengagement.

What's happening?

87.5 per cent of survey respondents were studying – 88 per cent of 16 to 19 year olds and 87.5 per cent of 20 to 24 year olds.

Survey respondents were also asked to rate their engagement with education during their first five years in Australia. The majority (85.5 per cent) reported good or very good engagement with education.

What's working?

- Education providers' awareness of (and ability to understand and respond to) the particular needs of young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds
- Culturally aware staff who understand the settlement experience
- Accessible services and supports within the school context
- Support from parents and family (emotional, financial and practical support)
- Connections with others who were also from diverse backgrounds.

What's not working?

- Inadequate or inaccessible support to assist young people in developing clear and achievable goals – including careers counselling
- Practical difficulties identifying and accessing post-compulsory education and training pathways (including lack of awareness of courses/options, no one to ask for advice, limited English language skills, financial barriers, visa status)
- Unrealistic expectations from parents and family/community, linked to limited knowledge and understanding of Australian education and training systems and pathways within family and community networks.[108]

Where to from here?

- More support for parents to understand and engage with education
- Expansion of programs that equip young people with the knowledge and resources to successfully navigate education and training pathways on their own
- Greater investment in training and support for careers guidance and transitions counsellors, particularly in working with young people with different visas.[109]

Employment

Supporting engagement in pathways towards employment for young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds requires ensuring they have support to build knowledge and skills to understand expectations regarding work and job seeking, assistance to build networks and experience, including work experience, and timely and appropriate careers guidance.[110] Young people also need to be supported to build social and cultural capital in order to develop knowledge of Australia's employment and economic landscape, and their rights.

What's happening?

Of the survey respondents who answered our survey questions about current employment 45.5 per cent were working.

Of those working:

- 12.5 per cent full-time
- 32.9 per cent part-time or casual
- 82.5 per cent were also studying[111]
- 30.0 per cent were also volunteering
- 4.6 per cent of respondents were not working or studying.[112]

Respondents to our survey were also asked to rate their experience of finding work during their first five years in Australia. Almost half (49.5 per cent) reported finding work was either difficult or very difficult.

What's working?

- Inclusive workplaces - workplaces that are diverse or that emphasise the importance of diversity in the workplace and that promote and practise cross-cultural ways of working
- Role models or mentors, both in the workplace and in employment programs
- Peer-to-peer programs.

What's not working?

- Lack of social and professional networks beyond their own (cultural or ethnic) community
- Lack of recognised local experience and qualifications
- Requirement to undertake unpaid work (volunteer roles and unpaid internships or work placements are increasingly required either as a formal part of studies or to build local experience), places pressure on meeting living costs and paid work and study requirements
- Discrimination (including based on English language proficiency)
- Visa status
- Lack of accessible, targeted supports and services to assist young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds to build soft skills and find meaningful work.

Where to from here?

- Employment support programs and services could improve by increasing cultural competence and diversity of staff
- Need for job preparation and readiness programs and supports, both in and out of school, to focus beyond job search skills to include guidance and information about cultural expectations and practices, how young people build and utilise networks, as well as career pathways and education options
- Expansion of peer-to-peer models, role models and mentors in employment programs
- Young people involved in the design and delivery of employment programs
- Community/youth-run or -led activities and businesses that can empower people from refugee and migrant backgrounds and promote self-reliance.

Stable income

Young people who are socioeconomically disadvantaged in Australia are less likely to complete year 12 or to be engaged in employment, education or training over the short- and longer-term. They also may be vulnerable to risk factors for social exclusion, such as limited access to health and transport services, potentially leading to isolation from the wider community.[113] Socioeconomic disadvantage is also associated with poorer health outcomes.

What's happening?

We asked survey respondents how often they had enough money to pay for the things they needed during their first five years in Australia.

- 27.8 per cent reported that they sometimes or rarely had enough money to pay for the things they needed
- 47.4 per cent said they had enough money most of the time
- 24.7 per cent stated that they had enough money all of the time.

What's working?

- Community organisations and programs that offer financial support (including covering the cost of sports participation, provision of basic goods and services such as food or transport)
- Support from family and friends.

What's not working?

- The pressure to work to meet basic needs while studying
- Eligibility for support (criteria can be exclusionary, including time in Australia, visa subclass, age).

Where to from here?

- More support to families to enable them to build financial skills and literacy to help themselves.

Safe, stable housing

Stable housing facilitates social integration and economic development.[115] Being able to access safe and stable housing requires that young people understand tenancy rights and responsibilities (including utilities), have the financial resources to secure suitable housing and have the skills and knowledge to be able to navigate the housing market and engage services when required.[116] Newly arrived young people are more likely to be at risk of housing instability and homelessness due to financial disadvantage, visa restrictions, family arrangements including family breakdown, and limited social capital.[117] Young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds may also face barriers navigating the private housing market [118] and can also face challenges accessing housing and homelessness services.[119]

What's happening?

Almost half (42.3 per cent) of the young people we surveyed reported that they had experienced some housing insecurity (8.2 per cent sometimes and 34.0 per cent most of the time).

What's working?

- Friends and social networks
- Targeted services for refugee and migrant young people (e.g. Reconnect).

What's not working?

- Lack of early intervention support to prevent family breakdown
- Financial disadvantage
- Housing affordability
- Lack of accessible services and supports for young people
- Lack of understanding and knowledge of how to access housing and their tenancy rights and responsibilities in Australia.

Where to from here?

- More support to help young people understand tenancy rights and responsibilities
- Assistance to address financial barriers
- Programs including education on skills and knowledge required to navigate the housing market and engage services when required.

Almost all areas of our social and physical world impact upon our health and well-being, from our genes and the environment we live in, to who we are friends with, our financial resources and the legal and social structures in place in our community. Research shows that young people who have high levels of well-being, or are psychologically resilient, are "more likely to respond constructively to challenges and difficulties they face in their lives."[120]

Positive physical, mental and sexual health

In addition to enjoying good physical, mental and sexual health it matters that young people have the skills, confidence and knowledge to navigate services and supports to meet their changing health and well-being needs during the early settlement period and beyond.

In Victoria, young people from disadvantaged areas, with a language background other than English or in a one-parent family are less likely to experience good health.[121] Some of the environmental risk factors known to increase the risk of mental illness in Australia, such as higher levels of social disadvantage, unemployment, trauma and separation from family and community, are more common in migrant communities.[122] It is of particular concern that while young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds may be at an increased risk of mental health problems they also report having greater difficulty accessing mental health care should they require it.[123]

What's happening?

Physical health: 78.4 per cent of young people surveyed self-reported good or very good physical health during their first five years in Australia.

Mental Health: 47.4 per cent of survey respondents rated their mental health during their first five years in Australia as OK or poor.

Sexual health: While our survey did not explore a separate indicator for sexual health, this was a key issue of importance to the young people we consulted.

What's working?

- Inclusive workplaces - workplaces that are diverse or that emphasise the importance of diversity in the workplace and that promote and practise cross-cultural ways of working
- Role models or mentors, both in the workplace and in employment programs
- Peer-to-peer programs.

What's not working?

- Lack of accessible health services that are culturally appropriate and that young people feel safe engaging with
- Stigma and shame, especially around mental and sexual health
- Intergenerational differences in ideas around 'healthy' behaviours/practices
- Concerns about privacy/confidentiality, particularly within ethnically or culturally specific health services
- Poor service knowledge or understanding of how seeking help might assist with their problems or concerns
- Visa status, including understanding of what medical support they are liable for and what is free or covered by private insurance.

Where to from here?

- Employment support programs and services could improve by increasing cultural competence and diversity of staff
- Need for job preparation and readiness programs and supports, both in and out of school, to focus beyond job search skills to include guidance and information about cultural expectations and practices, how young people build and utilise networks, as well as career pathways and education options
- Expansion of peer-to-peer models, role models and mentors in employment programs
- Young people involved in the design and delivery of employment programs
- Community/youth-run or -led activities and businesses that can empower people from refugee and migrant backgrounds and promote self-reliance.

Positive self-esteem

Self-esteem reflects a sense of self-worth and "is critical to a young person's capacity to build resilience and a sense of agency."[124] Among other things, self-esteem impacts upon by feelings of acceptance.[125] Poor self-esteem has been linked to poor mental health, early school leaving, and greater difficulties transitioning from school to work among young Victorians.[126] It is important to keep in mind that young people connected to supports can still experience low self-esteem and may need additional support, especially from services who understand them and to whom they can relate.[127]

What's happening?

69.3 per cent of survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement 'I feel like people from my own (or similar) cultural backgrounds are valued in Australia'. Across all questions in our survey, it was on this measure that the greatest number of young people rated their experience negatively, with almost one in three (30.7 per cent) disagreeing or strongly disagreeing with this statement.

Goals for the future

Having goals for the future and feeling confident to achieve them speaks to a young person's sense of agency and relates to self-esteem and well-being.[128] "Building a sense of efficacy can lead to active participation in groups and a development of trust between members of those groups." [129] Having goals for the future is also equally as important as having the skills, confidence and knowledge to access and negotiate pathways to achieving these.

What's happening?

88.5 per cent of survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement 'I feel confident I can achieve the goals I have for the future'.

What's working?

- Personal persistence and resilience
- Access to diverse opportunities to learn about possible futures
- Social connections (social capital), specifically guidance and encouragement from key supports, such as teachers, parents and friends.

What's not working?

- The burden of expectations – this includes pressure from people not believing in them and putting them down
- Structural barriers to participation, such as racism, could seem particularly insurmountable because it made them feel like they had no control over their future
- Limited support and guidance to identify and explore how they might achieve their goals.

Where to from here?

Schools and passionate teachers that saw my learning potentials and helped me set and achieve goals to become more independent.

Positive relationships

"Belonging to a community is one of the most important social determinants of well-being among young people."[130] Positive relationships and connections support youth settlement by providing a young person with a netwowrk on which they can draw for support and advice. Assisting young people to develop positive relationships include helping young people understand what positive relationships are and how they can build and maintain them.

What's happening?

To measure the strength of young people's positive relationships in their first five years in Australia, we asked young people to report whether they had someone they could go to, either from their own or a different cultural background, when they needed help.[131]

- 85.4 per cent of respondents reported that they had someone to go to when they needed help (sometimes, most of the time, always).
- 14.6 per cent said that they never or rarely had someone to go to.

What's working?

- Informal networks – peers who had grown up in Australia or had settled years earlier were often seen as guides to settling in, while more newly arrived peers were important sources of identification and self-reflection courtesy of their shared experience.
- Positive relationships with adults in support roles, such as teachers and case workers, were also identified as helpful in helping young people to access information and resources, manage issues or challenges as they arose, learn about Australia, and link into services or opportunities.

What's not working?

- Lack of family support / family separation – young people without family ties lacked critical support and resources that could encourage their participation and help them achieve their goals.

Positive intergenerational relationships – in Australia and overseas

Positive family relationships promote health and well-being by providing young people with safe, supportive environments where they develop important values, norms and behaviours as they move towards independence. Positive parent-adolescent relationships are associated with higher self-esteem and self-worth, better social functioning, and fewer mental health problems.[132] Healthy family functioning is also a key protective factor for children's resilience.[133]

For newly arrived young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds families are a critical source of sense of belonging and support promoting well-being when settling. However, migration can significantly alter family structures and roles, create family instability and conflict. During settlement, this can place significant pressure on families who are often already dealing with a range of issues that impact on the extent to which they can support their young people.[134] [135]

What's happening?

76.2 per cent of survey respondents said that their relationship with their family in the first five years in Australia was good or very good.

What's working?

Settlement support to reduce the level of stress placed on families in the early years of settlement – this includes community supports as well as funded services and program.

What's not working?

- Stress, particularly financial stress, impacting on mental health and family violence
- Diverging values and ideas between young people and their parents over time.

Where to from here?

- Opportunities to support conversations within families and communities, with particular guidance for parents about how to talk with young people
- More support for parents of adolescents to build awareness and understanding around norms and concepts of mental and sexual health in Australia.
- Opportunities for cross-generational learning and engagement, including forums for intergenerational discussions within ethnic, cultural or religious communities.
- Improved awareness of available supports and services for victims of family violence within new and emerging communities and among young people more generally.

Positive intergenerational relationships – in Australia and overseas

Young people are at a stage of life where they are learning new skills and competencies to prepare them for their transition to independence. Young people settling in to a new community are required to develop these skills and competencies within new and unfamiliar contexts. Supporting newly arrived young people to develop skills necessary to negotiate life in Australia successfully is a core function of settlement services (for humanitarian entrants) as well as schools, families, community organisations and governments at all levels. Support for young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds to develop life skills and competencies must take into consideration whether the young person has help and support at home to learn about important systems and structures in Australia.

What's working?

- Learning a new skill or about systems and programs at school
- When parents have information and knowledge to support young people in learning and developing these skills at home.

What's not working?

Limited on arrival advice and guidance for young people who are non-humanitarian entrants and/or are arriving with family.

Where to from here?

- More programs and services offering support to young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds to learn and develop these skills later on in their settlement journey (for many this meant after their first five years in Australia)
- Parents and families to receive similar support and guidance to help reinforce their learning at home and to ensure they had help at home if/when they have questions or need assistance
- More opportunities for community members, and young people, to drive new initiatives and programs for their communities that can raise awareness of key competencies and support building new skills, such as digital literacy
- Greater online opportunities to access information and build practical and personal skills, especially for parents and older siblings, who may benefit from online resources that are in their language and that they can engage with at their own pace, around work and other commitments.

Civic participation also goes beyond the socioeconomic conditions of settling in (e.g. housing, education, etc.) to "touch upon ideas of power and agency," including how newly arrived refugees and migrants engage as active agents of change in shaping their future.[136] Young people's active participation contributes to improvements in policies and services, which in turn has positive benefits for society, and is vital to community functioning in a modern democracy.

Understanding and enjoyment of Australia's political and civic rights and responsibilities and participation

The ability to exercise political, civil and social rights is important to the development of a sense of agency and connection to the society in which one lives.[137]

What's happening?

- Most (85.1 per cent) of the young people we surveyed agreed or strongly agreed with the statement 'I feel like I am contributing to Australian society'.
- More than one in ten (14.9 per cent) of young people surveyed did not feel like they are contributing to Australian society.

What's working?

- Young people who had access to knowledge and information about Australia's political and civic systems and how they work, reported feeling empowered to participate
- Young people were interested in taking up opportunities to engage in formal political processes and decision making.

What's not working?

- Lack of knowledge and awareness of: civil and political rights; how systems and institutions work; what role they could play in decision-making within their communities and Australian society more broadly
- Poor engagement with local governance and decision-making structures
- Lack of diverse voices within representative politics
- Lack of knowledge and understanding of Australian civic and political systems and institutions within their families and communities
- Feelings of exclusion from formal and electoral politics (related to their age, visa status and migrant or refugee background)
- The tone and language of public discussions feeling exclusionary (or accusatory), especially around particular topics that relate to particular communities or young people – felt this could serve to silence or exclude young people from engaging in conversations about issues that impacted them.

Where to from here?

- Local councils to work on engaging more with newly arrived residents, including providing information about what the council's role is and how residents can have a say in issues impacting upon their community
- More and diverse opportunities for young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds to have their voices heard
- Greater encouragement of young people from diverse backgrounds to engage in civic activities and express their rights (e.g. enrolling to vote, participating in the census, sitting on youth councils, boards and committees).

Understanding and enjoyment of legal rights and responsibilities

Research shows strong relationships between age and vulnerability to legal problems, with particular legal and rights issues tending to affect younger age groups.[138] Social and economic disadvantage and exclusion can also further increase the vulnerability of young people to legal problems,[139] with research showing that "legal problems can 'beget problems' producing a vicious cycle of vulnerability".[140] Qualitative and quantitative studies focusing on the legal needs of specific disadvantaged groups have also demonstrated low levels of legal capability among marginalised youth.[141]

What's happening?

59.8 per cent of the young people we surveyed reported good or very good understanding of their rights and the law during their first five years in Australia.

What's working?

Young people who have had opportunities to learn about their legal rights and responsibilities, either through formal education or community programs and activities, have found the experience highly valuable and insightful.

What's not working?

- Learning about their rights and the law in Australia often happened by chance rather than design - this could be a disempowering feeling
- Young people do not know where or who to go to for help.

Where to from here?

- Greater access to information and advice about legal rights and responsibilities for newly arrived young people, especially those who may not engage in mainstream education
- Build the capacity of the legal sector to ensure legal practitioners have the resources and training to work effectively with refugees and migrants, including young people.

Participation in volunteering activities

Young people's engagement in activities such as volunteering has been shown to have positive effects on health and well-being, social connectedness and to "build social cohesion and strengthen social networks, resulting in more robust multiculturalism in practice".[142] However, research has shown that volunteering within refugee and migrant communities often occurs outside commonly acknowledged definitions and frameworks of volunteering.[143] For example, a 2008 report from the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Family, Community, Housing and Youth, reported that "'volunteering' is not necessarily a word or concept used by CALD cultural contexts and that voluntary contributions within those cultural contexts often go unrecognised and unreported".[144] Thus, while we may have data on levels of 'volunteering' for this population group, we need to treat such data with caution.

What's happening?

- 20 per cent of survey respondents reported that they were currently volunteering
- 22.1 per cent of those studying were also volunteering, most in addition to working
- 51.5 per cent of those we surveyed experienced some difficulty finding opportunities to volunteer.

Social participation is not only important for personal development, health and well-being it also influences economic and civic engagement, as social relationships and networks can facilitate access to knowledge, resources and opportunities. Social participation can also strengthen community networks and relationships, with social links within and between groups promoting connectedness and social cohesion.[145] "A person's ability to access and mobilise resources that reside in social relationships" is referred to as social capital.[146]

Positive peer networks

International research exploring how global forces and changing systems and structures are shaping adolescent and young adult health and well-being has reported that later marriage and parenthood, the prolongation of education and social media have all acted to expand the role of peers and youth cultures within the lives of adolescents.[147] Peer connections, peer modelling and awareness of peer norms can be protective factors against violence, substance abuse and sexual risks.[148] Peer acceptance can also reduce the negative impact of disadvantage.[149] Conversely, poor or negative peer relationships can increase health and well-being risk factors.[150] Supporting young people to understand and develop positive and healthy peer relationships, and to navigate challenges in relationships with their peers, is essential to their development. Those working with young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds settling in Australia may need to assist new arrivals to link into programs and services that facilitate peer networking, including peer-to-peer mentoring and support groups.

What's happening?

- 60.4 per cent of the young people we surveyed reported that during their first five years in Australia they had friends who were there for them when they needed them (always or most of the time)
- 20.8 per cent reported they never or rarely had friends who were there for them when they needed them.
- We also explored the diversity of young peoples' peer networks, as data from the BNLA suggests that young people build more diverse friendship networks over time.[151]
- 56.0 per cent of young people reported that they had friends from their own (or a similar) cultural background who were there for them when they needed them.
- 64.8 per cent who reported having friends from different cultural backgrounds who were there for them when they needed them.

What's working?

- English language schools and mainstream schools were recognised as important sites for building relationships with peers
- A shared experience of migration
- Culturally inclusive spaces.

What's not working?

- Limited English language proficiency served as a barrier to building peer networks for more newly arrived young people
- Discrimination
- Lack of opportunities to get to know people outside of formal education.

Bridging and bonding networks

Bonding networks refer to social relationships between people from similar backgrounds and experiences. Bridging networks are those social relationships among people of dissimilar backgrounds outside your social circle. These support networks foster social inclusion and are critical to positive well-being and health.[152] The National Youth Settlement Framework identifies both bonding and bridging networks as important facilitators of youth settlement.

What's happening?

Bridges: 86.2 per cent of the young people we surveyed reported that they had someone to go to from a different cultural background when they needed help during their first five years in Australia.

Bonds: Most (84.6 per cent) of the young people we surveyed reported that they had someone to go to from their own (or a similar) cultural background when they needed help during their first five years in Australia.

What's working?

Bridges:

- Culturally inclusive spaces and social activities
- School and sport are important vehicles for building bridging networks.

Bonds:

- Members of the same cultural/ethnic/language community linking in to more established networks/groups
- Religion/religious groups and to a lesser degree cultural events and activities.

What's not working?

Bridges:

- Lack of awareness or connection into sources of information about events and activities, especially in their local area.

Bonds:

- Negative mainstream media and popular culture representations of their communities in Australia (tested their feelings of wanting to build and engage these connections)
- The ideas, values and practices of members of their community, which could make it difficult to establish a strong bond.

Discrimination and racism

Social determinants have a significant impact on health and well-being.[153] The World Health Organization has defined social determinants as "the conditions, in which people are born, grow, work, live, and age, and the wider set of forces and systems shaping the conditions of daily life" and include economic policies and systems, development agendas, social norms, social policies and political systems.[154] Racism and discrimination are a key social determinants of health and well-being for young people from refugee backgrounds settling in Victoria.[155] [156] Prejudices based on race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, disability, refugee status and other forms of discrimination are also known to limit social and economic participation.[157]

What's happening?

51.5 per cent of the young people we surveyed reported that during their first five years in Australia they participated in sports, recreation and other community events and activities most of the time or always, while 96.9 per cent of the young people we surveyed had participated at all in community life during this period .

What's working?

- English language schools and mainstream schools were recognised as important sites for building relationships with peers
- A shared experience of migration
- Culturally inclusive spaces.

What's not working?

- Limited English language proficiency served as a barrier to building peer networks for more newly arrived young people
- Discrimination
- Lack of opportunities to get to know people outside of formal education.

Where to from here?

- Identified the importance of recognising the multiple (and sometimes overlapping) communities young people inhabit and how their experiences within these different social spaces can differ quite dramatically
- Need to understand how participation differs within different communities – for example, one's own ethnic, religious or cultural community compared to in the wider community. This will assist with exploration of the different barriers and facilitators young people face in these different spaces.

Participation in community life (e.g. sport and recreation)

Being able to participate in community life, feeling valued, safe, and that they belong, are all necessary if young people are to reach their full potential in their new homes.[158]

What's happening?

84.5 per cent of the young people we surveyed reported experiencing discrimination during their first five years in Australia.

During the consultations, participants revealed that experiences of discrimination persisted beyond their first five years in Australia.

What's working?

- Connecting with others who have had similar experiences, including mentors and peers
- Direct support to young people from peers and people in positions of leadership.

What's not working?

- The role the media play in perpetuating stereotypes and labelling young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds
- Lack of support for young people to feel they can address issues of discrimination and racism when faced with them.

Where to from here?

- Ongoing targeted professional development for educators and others working closely with young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds to address experiences of racism and discrimination in these settings
- Greater investment in programs, such as the Victorian Government's Recruit Smarter pilot, that aim to not only weed out unconscious bias but that work with all Victorian's to enable them to identify unconscious bias and its effects on young people
- Young people would like to be better equipped to respond to racism and discrimination when it occurs and call for investment in programs that support young people, their families and communities to understand their rights and how they can respond to experiences of racism and discrimination
- New and innovative techniques employed within and outside of the classroom to address systemic and casual racism and discrimination
- Direct engagement of young people from diverse backgrounds in the development and delivery of anti-racism messages and programs.

Conclusion

Five to ten years after settling in Victoria most young people are doing well. They feel confident they can achieve the goals they have for the future, are navigating multiple cultural identities as they negotiate settlement in Australia, and are accessing and engaging with a range of services to meet their needs. However, almost one in every four of the young Victorians we spoke to do not feel like they belong.

Young people see a strong sense of identity as fundamental to feeling settled and like when they belong. How young people migrated to Australia and the supports and sense of welcome they received when they arrived played a significant role in how they feel about themselves and in their settlement. Personal relationships and informal networks developed during the first five years in Australia contributed positively to settlement outcomes for young people. Positive relationships with family, as well as access to support from people from their own cultural or ethnic community and bridging networks among peers, were factors found to promote positive settlement outcomes. The quality of support and assistance young people received from services in Australia during their first five years also played a significant role in setting them up to succeed.

In contrast, negative public attitudes and misrepresentations of religion, culture or ethnic communities, experiences of discrimination and exclusion, as well as not feeling valued, were factors identified as contributing to poorer settlement outcomes. These were also more commonly reported by those young people who said that they do not feel like they belong in Australia.

Based on the findings there is work to be done to strengthen settlement transitions for young people – in particular in ensuring mainstream or generalist services, opportunities and resources are open and accessible to young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds. Work is especially needed in the areas of mental health and housing – with housing instability and poor mental health shown to have the most significant adverse impact on the settlement outcomes of the young Victorians we surveyed.

Poorer settlement outcomes were also associated with poor engagement with education and difficulties finding work. Young people wanted to see more targeted support to help them stay in education longer and make the transition into work. They also see a need for greater efforts to address long-term and intergenerational disadvantage – which includes working with families and communities to help them support their young people.

Settlement is a dynamic process shaped by many things and young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds are a diverse group who arrive in Australia with a range of strengths and resources. As they progress towards adulthood young people settling in Australia will face challenges and opportunities that are distinct to adults and their Australian-born peers. Supporting young people to settle well and become full and active participants in and contributors to Australia not only sets them up for the future, but it also helps ensure that the contributions of young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds in Australia are drawn upon to benefit us all. However, addressing their particular needs and supporting them to settle well requires a targeted approach to policy and service delivery informed by relevant, current research and evidence.

This is the first time the National Youth Settlement Framework's suite of indicators and markers have been used to measure youth settlement outcomes in Australia. There have been numerous learnings from this investigation, and the findings provide significant initial insights into how young people settling in Victoria are faring and where supports and services could be strengthened to meet their needs better and support their long-term settlement outcomes.

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Appendix 1:

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112 Rather than demonstrating a greater level of engagement in study among our survey cohort, it is likely that these results are impacted by the high number of students who were reached in the survey distribution method (see Limitations.) Further to this, it is important to note that while 4.5 per cent of our survey respondents indicated that they were currently looking for work and were not also studying or working, a further 23 per cent of respondents did not provide a response to this question at all. As we did not explicitly ask respondents if they were not engaged in employment or study we cannot reliably report accurately on those not engaged in work or study.

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153 Racism impacts directly and indirectly upon physical and mental health acting as a stressor that has been linked to a range of health conditions. Victorian research shows that adults who experience racism at least weekly are 2.5 times more likely than those who never experience racism to be in fair or poor health. By comparison, adults who smoke are 1.9 times more likely than non-smokers to be in fair or poor health". The "strength of the association between racism and mental health is significantly stronger than between smoking or obesity and mental health."Victorian adults who frequently experience racism almost five times more likely than those who do not experience racism to have poor mental health, they are also 2.5 times more likely than those who do not experience racism to have poor physical health Department of Health and Human Services (2017). Racism in Victoria and what it means for the health of Victorians. Melbourne: State Government of Victoria, pp. vi, 23, 25-26

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