Building a New Life in Australia (BNLA): The Longitudinal Study of Humanitarian Migrants

A snapshot of findings from the first three waves (2013, 2014 and 2015)

Who’s in BNLA?

- **2399** humanitarian migrants (AGED 15-75)
- **55%** came to Australia alone
- **90%** of interviews in a language other than English
- **76%** had personally experienced trauma

Time in Australia AT FIRST INTERVIEW (%)

- < 6 months: 75%
- 6-12 months: 12%
- 1-2 years: 9%
- 2+ years: 4%

Educational background

- **16%** had a university degree or trade or technical qualification
- **18%** men
- **14%** women
- **16%** had never attended school
- **13%** men
- **20%** women

Pre-arrival level of education

- **11%** had studied since arrival
- **34%** had studied in the last 12 months

Study other than English

- By wave 3, **39%** of respondents who had participated in all waves had undertaken some study other than English since arrival in Australia.
- **16%** of those studying were taking courses for trade or technical qualifications.
- **34%** of those studying were taking courses for trade or technical qualifications.

Engagement in Australian life

- **79%** feel safe
- **52%** have family in Australia
- **45%** good living conditions

What hinders and helps settlement

IN THE FIRST THREE TO SIX MONTHS

- **66%** language barriers
- **33%** being homesick
- **28%** lack of employment opportunities
- **28%** financial problems
- **79%** feel safe
- **60%** children are happy
- **45%** good living conditions
- **48%** feel welcome in the community

HINDERS

- Language barriers
- Being homesick
- Lack of employment opportunities
- Financial problems

HELPS

- Easy to understand Australian ways and culture
- Easy to talk to Australian neighbours
- Always feels welcome in Australia

Becoming part of the Australian community (%)

- Wave 1
- Wave 3

49 MAIN LANGUAGES

TOP 5 MAIN LANGUAGES SPOKEN AT HOME (%)

- Arabic: 23%
- Assyrian: 18%
- Persian: 17%
- Hazaragi: 11%
- Dari: 9%

Top 5 main languages

- 23% Arabic
- 18% Assyrian
- 17% Persian

Top countries of birth

- Iraq: 35%
- Afghanistan: 30%
- Pakistan: 14%
- Mynamar: 14%
- Iran: 11%

**The full report is available at www.dss.gov.au/bnla**
45% reported they could understand English well or very well.

Around half the respondents found using government services difficult because of language barriers.

79% could not understand English well or at all prior to arrival.

45% reported they could understand English well or very well.

Characteristics of those who report not understanding English at all include:
- Greater likelihood of serious mental health problems
- Had not attended English lessons
- Illiterate
- 50+ years old
- Being female

Reasons for stopping English lessons IN YEAR PRIOR TO WAVE 3 (%) (666 RESPONDENTS)

Top 3 difficulties in finding paid employment
1. Lack of necessary qualifications or skills
2. Lack of Australian work experience
3. Poor English language skills

57% of working age respondents had pre-arrival work experience
76% men
33% women

Proportion in paid employment by how well respondents speak English ACROSS WAVES (%)