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)
- 90% of interviews in a language other than English
- 43% came to Australia alone
- 76% had personally experienced trauma
- 91% speak 2 or more languages

Top 5 main languages spoken at home (%)
- Arabic: 23
- Assyrian: 18
- Persian: 17
- Hazaragi: 11
- Dari: 9

Age of respondents and their family members (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>BNLA respondents</th>
<th>Australian population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-17</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-34</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-64</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65+</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Time in Australia at first interview (%)
- < 6 months: 12%
- 1-2 years: 4%
- 6-12 months: 9%
- 2+ years: 75%

Top countries of birth of principal applicants (%)
- Iraq: 35%
- Afghanistan: 14%
- Pakistan: 11%
- Myanmar: 7%
- Iran: 4%
- Other countries: 30%
The full report is available at www.dss.gov.au/bnla

**English**

**How well respondents report understanding English** across waves (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wave</th>
<th>Very well</th>
<th>Well</th>
<th>Not well</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre arrival</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wave 1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wave 2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wave 3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Proportion who responded in all waves who studied English by wave (%)

- **Wave 1**
  - Male: 73
  - Female: 70
  - Total: 72
- **Wave 2**
  - Male: 51
  - Female: 55
  - Total: 53
- **Wave 3**
  - Male: 36
  - Female: 44
  - Total: 49

When asked about pre-arrival expectations about the length of time it would take to learn English:

- **26%** of respondents thought it was better than expected
- **50%** the same as expected
- **24%** thought it was worse than expected

**Reasons for stopping English lessons**

- **29** Work
- **29** Family responsibilities
- **23** Completed the course
- **20** English improved
- **10** Transport difficulties
- **4** Other

Men were more likely to stop studying for work reasons

Women were more likely to stop studying for family reasons

Characteristics of those who report not understanding English at all include:

- Greater likelihood of serious mental health problems
- Illiterate
- Had not attended English lessons
- 50+ years old
- Being female
- Never attended school

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

Proportion in paid employment
AT TIME OF EACH INTERVIEW, BY WAVE (%)

![Proportion in paid employment chart]

In wave 1 most respondents had been here for less than six months and many were taking English lessons.

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

![Proportion in paid employment by English ability chart]

Note: Includes only respondents aged 18 to 64 years of age.

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

38% of those working in wave 3 were self employed.
57% of working age respondents had pre-arrival work experience.
76% men
33% women

67% of families in wave 3 were reliant on government benefits as their main source of income, down from 88% in wave 1.

Around 40% of families experienced one or more type of financial stress each year.

The full report is available at www.dss.gov.au/bnl
Education

Pre-arrival level of education

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

Study other than English

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

Engagement in Australian life

What hinders and helps settlement

IN THE FIRST THREE TO SIX MONTHS

**HINDERS**
- 66% Language barriers
- 51% Worrying about family or friends overseas
- 33% Lack of employment opportunities
- 28% Financial problems

**HELPs**
- 79% Feel safe
- 52% Have family in Australia
- 60% Children are happy
- 48% Feel welcome in the community
- 45% Good living conditions

Becoming part of the Australian community (%)

- Easy to understand Australian ways and culture: 47 Wave 1, 59 Wave 3
- Easy to talk to Australian neighbours: 31 Wave 1, 49 Wave 3
- Always feels welcome in Australia: 54 Wave 1, 61 Wave 3

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