



Australian Government
Department of Social Services

National Centre for Longitudinal Data

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

Wave 4 Update (Addendum to the Wave 3 Report)



Creative Commons licence



With the exception of the Commonwealth Coat of Arms, Department of Social Services Logo, photographs, images, signatures and where otherwise noted, all material presented in this publication is provided under a Creative Commons BY Attribution 3.0 <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/au/licence>.

The details of the relevant licence conditions are available on the Creative Commons website <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/au/legalcode>

Suggested citation

Department of Social Services. (2019). *Building a New Life in Australia (BNLA): The Longitudinal Study of Humanitarian Migrants - Wave 4 Update (Addendum to the Wave 3 Report)*. Canberra: Department of Social Services.

ISBN: 978-1-925318-84-5 (Online)

CONTENTS

Introduction	2
About Building a New Life in Australia – Survey sample	2
Language background and English skills and acquisition	3
Education	5
Employment	6
Income and financial stress	9
Health	10
Community support and participation	11

Introduction

Building a New Life in Australia (BNLA): The Longitudinal Study of Humanitarian Migrants is a long-term project researching how humanitarian migrants settle into life in Australia. It is the first long-term study of humanitarian migrants to Australia.

An extensive report on the findings from the first 3 waves of the BNLA research was published by the Department of Social Services in November 2017 (subsequently referred to as the Wave 3 Report). This update is an addendum to the Wave 3 Report summarising wave 4 findings. Unlike the original report, it does not provide detailed commentary on or explanation of the data. It includes only updated tables and figures that incorporate data from wave 4. Readers should consider the data in this update, in conjunction with the findings from the Wave 3 Report for a full contextual overview. Similar to wave 2, interviews in wave 4 were conducted by telephone. As discussed in the Wave 3 Report the wave 2 results differed substantially from those in waves 1 and 3, potentially the result of the change in mode of interview, from face to face to telephone interviews. Subsequently wave 2 results were largely omitted from the Wave 3 Report. Telephone interviews also necessitated shorter questionnaires and some questions asked of all respondents in waves 1 and 3 were restricted to principal respondents in waves 2 and 4. In such cases, comparison with longer waves is not necessarily appropriate given the gender disparity between principal and secondary respondents. To overcome this, data may be shown only for the group that was asked the question in all four waves.

The attrition rate between waves 1 and 2 was greater than anticipated and the attrition rate between waves 2 and 3 was lower. It is possible that the high attrition rate between the first two waves also had an impact on the wave 2 response patterns. However, while the wave 4 interviews were conducted by telephone, the attrition rate was very different with the response rate actually increasing from wave 3. There is some evidence that patterns of response also varied with interview mode and some caution is recommended when comparing data in waves with different modes. In this update, results for all four waves are included where the questions were asked. However readers are requested to note that the pattern in results across waves may be in part due to a change in the mode of interview.

Of the 2,399 original respondents, 1,929 respondents participated in wave 4 and 1,549 responded in all four waves. A group who responds in all waves of interest is called the balanced panel. The 4 wave balanced panel was 53.8 per cent male and 46.2 per cent female compared to 54.5 per cent male and 45.5 per cent female in wave 1. It is important to acknowledge that the results in this update may vary from those in the Wave 3 Report as the balanced panel for the first three waves (n=1,704) is different from the balanced panel for the first four waves. The balanced panel is used in this update where applicable.

Numbering of the tables and figures in this update reflects the equivalent table or figure in the Wave 3 Report. Comments on tables and figures are only included to draw attention to changes of note. In a few cases, new figures or tables have been added showing detail previously presented in the text. In these cases, page numbers provide reference points in the Wave 3 Report.

About Building a New Life in Australia – Survey sample

Table 2.2: Numbers in the BNLA sample by wave

Sample members	Wave 1	Wave 2	Wave 3	Wave 4
Principal respondent	1 509	1 284	1 181	1 244
Secondary respondent	755	632	642	685
Adolescent secondary respondent	135	93	71	N/A
Total number of respondents	2 399	2 009	1 894	1 929
Wave 3 Child module — child respondents	N/A	N/A	427	N/A
Enumerated person	1 808	1 553	2 141	2 898
Non-responding/non-enumerated person	N/A	645	856	851
Balanced Panel	2 399	2 009	1 704	1 549

Notes: Adolescent secondary respondents were aged between 15 and 17. By wave 4, they had become 18 or older and were counted as secondary respondents. Children responding to the child module in wave 3 were aged between 11 and 17 years.

Language background and English skills and acquisition

Figure 5.3: Self-reported level of understanding of spoken English across five time points (n=1 494), per cent

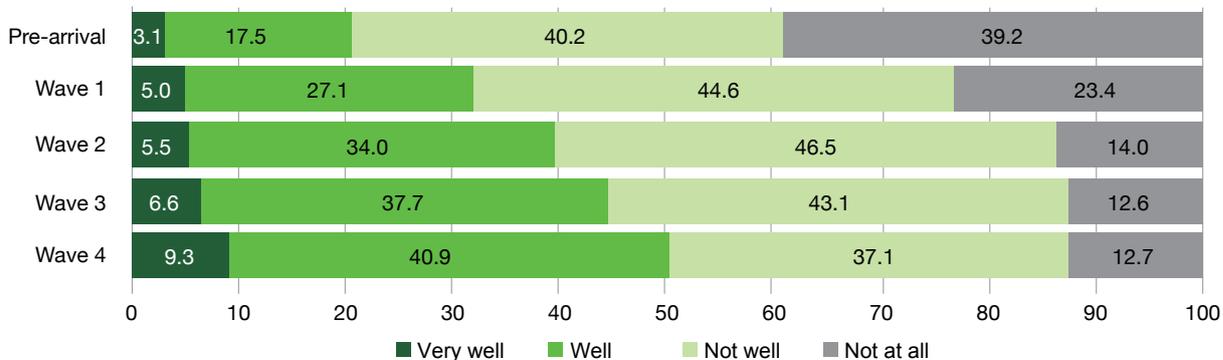


Figure 5.4: Self-reported level of English speaking ability across five time points (n=1 478), per cent

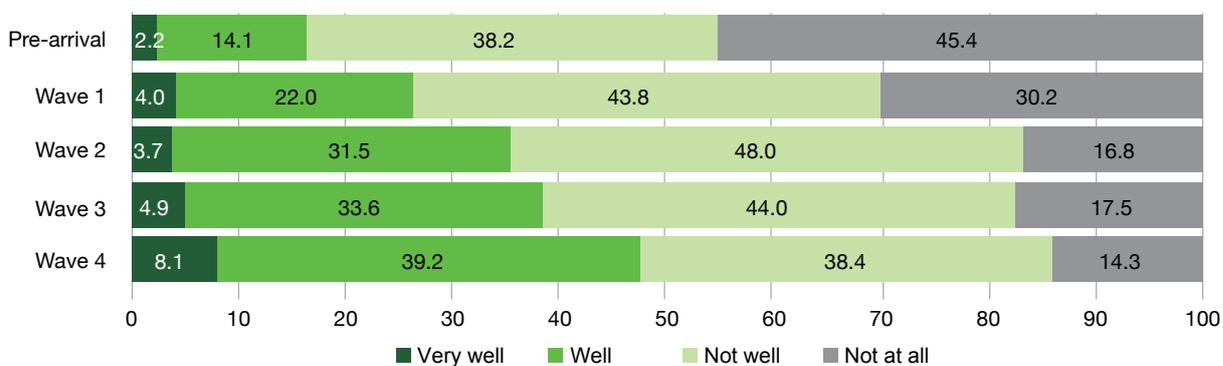


Figure 5.5: Self-reported level of English reading ability across five time points (n=1 497), per cent

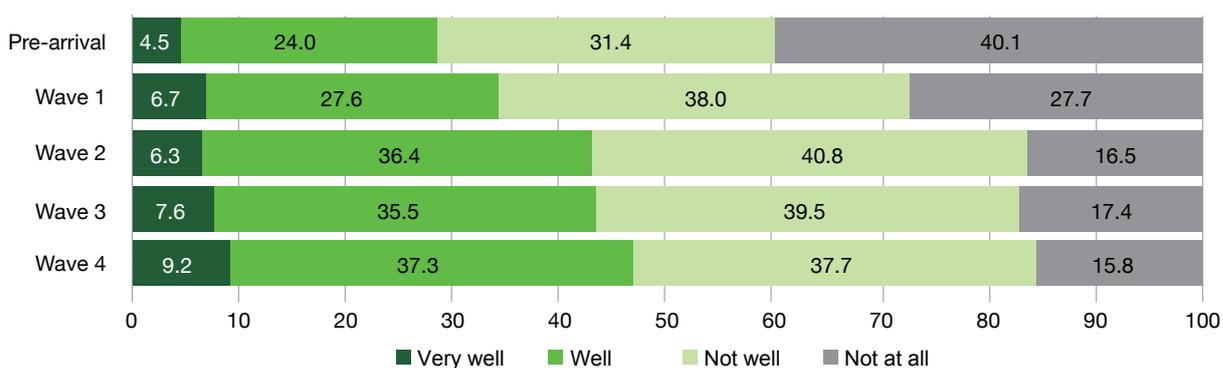


Figure 5.6: Self-reported level of English writing ability across five time points (n=1 497), per cent

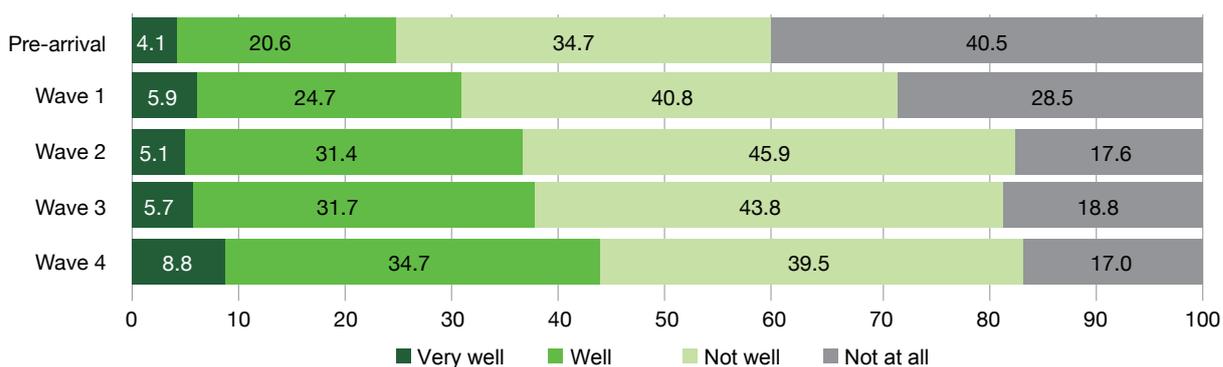
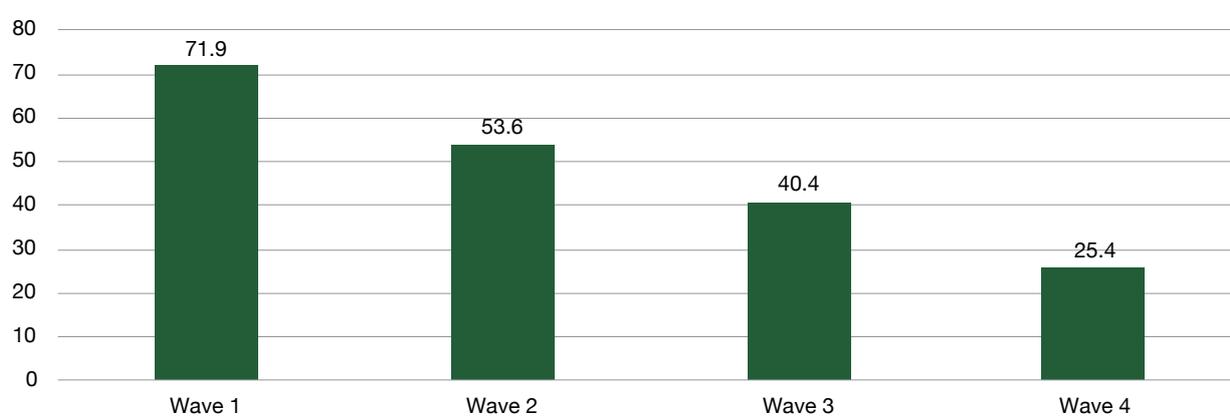


Figure 5.3 shows a continued increase between waves in the proportion of respondents who report understanding English as “well” or “very well”. In wave 4, just over half of the respondents (50.2 per cent) rate their English comprehension as well or very well. A similar trend is evident in wave 4 for other areas of proficiency with 47.3 per cent speaking English well or very well, 46.5 per cent reading English well or very well and 43.5 per cent rating their English writing ability as well or very well. The difference in improvement between waves 2 and 3 is significant only for understanding English. However, the difference in improvement between waves 3 and 4 is significant for understanding, speaking and writing, suggesting that after a “plateauing”¹ of English learning observed in wave 3, respondents are showing an improvement in their English language abilities. Also of note is that the proportion of those who did not understand English at all remains largely unchanged in wave 4 from the previous two waves.

New figure 1: Proportion of respondents studying English at time of each wave interview, balanced panel (n=1 549), per cent (ref page 24)



New figure 1 shows a decrease in the proportion of respondents studying English at the time of each interview. However, the balance of the sample in each wave may have studied English and stopped prior to interview or had no need to study because their English was “already good”. It should also be noted that a small number of respondents who did not provide a specific ‘yes’ or ‘no’ answer are counted as ‘not studying’.

This decrease in the proportion studying English is not surprising as respondents use up their allocation of free English tuition, reach Functional English proficiency or leave to concentrate on other aspects of their lives. Table 5.5 shows that in waves 1, 2 and 3, work and family were the most common reasons for stopping English lessons. However, in wave 4 the most common reasons were that respondents had finished the course, followed by work or other unspecified reasons.

Table 5.5: Reasons for stopping English language lessons, waves 1, 2, 3 and 4, per cent

Reason stopped lessons	Wave 1 (n=110)	Wave 2 (n=598)	Wave 3 (n=666)	Wave 4 (n=739)
Work	30.9	31.9	29.9	27.5
Family	23.6	24.6	29.0	23.7
Completed the course	21.8	23.4	19.7	30.9
Class wasn't helpful	16.4	Not asked	Not asked	Not asked
English improved	10.9	15.1	10.1	14.5
Transport difficulties	9.1	Not asked	4.2	3.4
Experienced discrimination	2.7	0.2	Not asked	Not asked
Cost	0.9	Not asked	Not asked	Not asked
Other	Not asked	27.6	22.5	27.5

Note: Respondents could select multiple responses.

In wave 4 most respondents (77.9 per cent) selected only one reason for stopping English language lessons.

1 The phenomenon of ‘plateauing’ in adult language learning often follows a period of improvement in learning. When learners ‘plateau’ their learning slows or stops for a period of time (Richards, 2008; Zhao Hong Han, 2004)

Education

Table 6.3: Educational qualifications recognised in Australia, number

Recognition	Wave 1 (n=134)	Wave 3 (n=66)	Wave 4 (n=28)
Yes, fully recognised	20	10	6
Yes, partially recognised	10	12	4
Not yet, currently being assessed	55	11	7
No, assessed but not recognised	25	15	3
Not specified	24	18	8

Note: some respondents may be counted more than once, for example if they are waiting for determination in one wave and have received it in another. Question not asked in wave 2.

In wave 1 there were 386 respondents who had a university, technical or trade qualification. New table 1 shows the skills recognition status of the respondents by the time of the wave 4 interview for all the original respondents. More than half of the eligible sample had not applied for recognition of their qualifications as at the most recent wave of data available for them; however those who did apply tended to apply in the period shortly after arrival (out of 168 who did apply, 134 applied in wave 1). Additionally, the majority who received full recognition were also most likely to receive it shortly after arrival.

New table 1: Overseas education and skills recognition status in wave 4, number and per cent (ref page 33)

Recognition of qualifications	(n=386)	Per cent
Applied for recognition – Qualifications fully recognised	36	9.3
Applied for recognition – Qualifications partially recognised	26	6.7
Applied for recognition – Qualifications not recognised	43	11.1
Applied for recognition – Outcome unknown	63	16.3
Did not apply for recognition as at wave 4	104	26.9
Did not apply for recognition as at wave 1; further status unknown	99	25.6
Application status not specified	15	3.9
Total	386	100.0

Table 6.4: Respondents studying (other than English) by gender, 4 wave balanced panel, per cent

Study Status	Wave 1		Wave 2		Wave 3		Wave 4	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Studying at time of interview	7.6	6.7	12.9	13.8	12.6	17.0	12.0	16.2
Stopped study/job training without completing since previous interview*	1.1	0.5	3.3	2.5	5.7	4.6	4.2	4.1
Completed study/job training since previous interview	1.8	1.6	7.6	3.6	10.4	6.8	10.8	10.9
Not currently studying and not studied since previous interview*	89.5	91.3	76.2	80.0	71.4	71.6	73.1	68.8

Note: Restricted to respondents who provided a specific response in all four waves.

Men n=761; Women n=631

* In wave 1, these questions refer to the time since arrival in Australia.

In wave 3, men were more likely than women to have (started and) completed a course in between the interviews, while women were more likely to still be studying at the time of interview. However, while women were still more likely than men were to be studying at the time of the wave 4 interview, they were as likely as men were to have finished their course. The slight decline in the proportions of women studying in those two waves is not significant.

Table 6.6: Types of study or training undertaken by respondents by wave, number of respondents

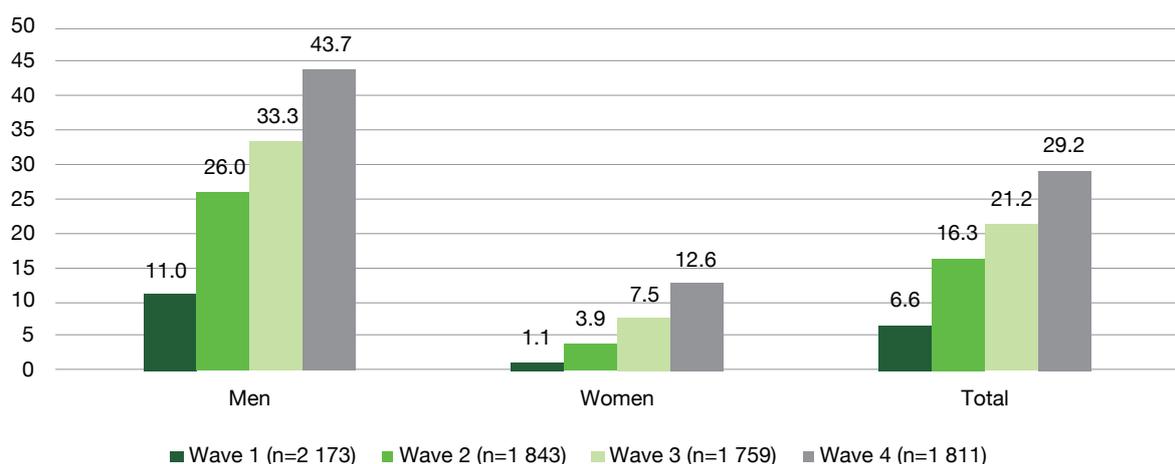
Type of study	Wave 1 (n=354)	Wave 2 (n=499)	Wave 3 (n=567)	Wave 4 (n=579)
Secondary school	67	58	82	70
Work experience	60	48	61	19
Short course	56	149	128	124
Trade or technical qualification	41	204	178	279
University degree	33	28	49	59
Paid traineeship	24	not asked	not asked	not asked
Other	not asked	32	65	30
Not specified	90	10	37	29

Note: Some respondents undertook more than one type of study or training.

While there is little difference between waves 3 and 4 in the number of respondents undertaking study other than English, there is a large increase in wave 4 in the number of those undertaking a trade or technical qualification compared to other types of courses. However, the number of those undertaking a trade or technical qualification in wave 2 is also disproportionately high. This may be a function of the mode of interview. In wave 4, the number undertaking work experience courses dropped considerably.

Employment

Figure 7.1: Paid employment by gender and wave, per cent

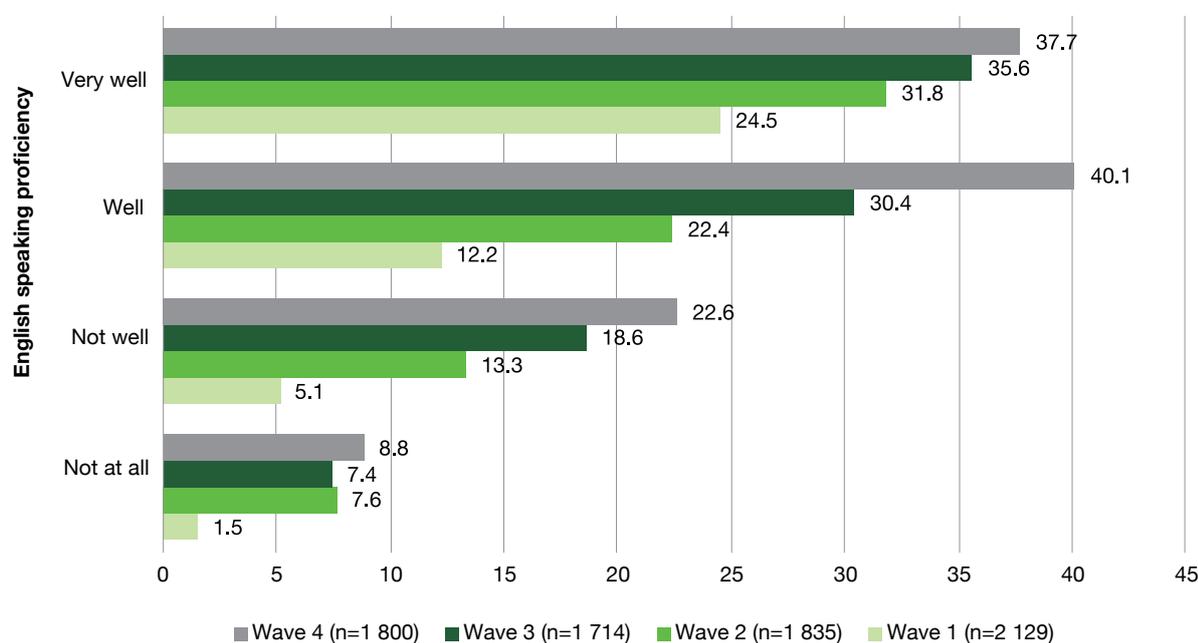


Note: Only includes working age (18 to 64 years) respondents. Includes respondents who gave a non-specific response.

Of those who were working in wave 4 and had participated in all four waves (n=398), 34.7 per cent were working for the first time in wave 4, 31.7 per cent had worked in one previous wave, 24.4 per cent had worked in two and the remaining 9.3 per cent had worked in all four waves.²

² This is based on the question about whether they were working at the time of interview. It does not include those who may have worked in the period between interviews but not at the time of interview.

Figure 7.3: Paid employment by English speaking ability by wave, per cent



Note: Only includes working age (18 to 64 years) respondents. Non-specific responses are excluded.

The wave 4 data shows a continuation of the trend associating better English speaking ability with employment.

Table 7.1: Type of employment, principal respondents by wave, per cent

Employment type	Wave 1 (n=135)	Wave 2 (n=260)	Wave 3 (n=311)	Wave 4 (n=405)
Casual basis	63.7	56.5	44.1	41.5
Permanent ongoing basis	17.0	22.7	25.4	26.7
Self-employed	5.9	5.0	10.6	19.0
Fixed term contract	5.2	12.7	14.8	11.1
Other	5.2	2.3	3.5	1.5
Non-specific response	3.0	0.8	1.6	0.2

Note: Restricted to principal respondents between 18 and 64 years of age and in paid employment at the time of interview.

Only principal respondents were asked their employment type in waves 2 and 4, but as shown in Figure 7.1 the majority of those in paid employment are men and in each wave, more than half of the women in paid employment were principal respondents. Wave 4 data shows a continuation in the decrease in the proportion of respondents working on a casual basis and a commensurate increase in the proportion working in permanent ongoing employment. Also of note is the large jump in the proportion of those who are self-employed.

Table 7.2: Hours worked by wave, per cent

Hours worked	Wave 1 (n=123)	Wave 2 (n=292)	Wave 3 (n=336)	Wave 4 (n=508)
15 hours or less	17.9	13.7	17.3	14.2
16 to 34 hours	23.6	26.0	22.6	25.4
35 to 40 hours	40.7	45.9	47.0	47.0
41 hours or more	17.9	14.4	13.1	13.4

Note: Restricted to respondents between 18 and 64 years of age. Non-specific responses are excluded.

The reported number of hours worked is not significantly different across the waves.

Table 7.14: Types of occupation of respondents in Australia, by wave, per cent

Type of occupation	Wave 1 (n=130)	Wave 2 (n=285)	Wave 3 (n=373)	Wave 4 (n=519)
Managers	4.6	3.9	0.0	2.7
Professionals	3.8	3.9	4.6	3.7
Technicians/tradesmen	30.0	31.9	23.9	31.8
Community/personal services	10.0	10.2	10.5	14.6
Clerical/administrative	0.8	1.1	0.5	1.7
Sales	0.8	4.9	3.5	3.3
Machinery operators	10.0	8.4	7.0	7.5
Labourers	33.1	35.8	37.8	34.1
Unassigned	6.9	0.0	12.3	0.6

Note: Restricted to respondents between 18 and 64 years of age. Non-specific responses are excluded.

Table 7.14 shows that the proportion of respondents working in community and personal service type occupations increased in wave 4. This is largely driven by women (see Table 7.15), with 41.3 per cent of employed women working in such occupations.

Table 7.15 (equivalent): Types of occupation of respondents in Australia by gender, wave 4, per cent

Type of occupation	Male (n=415)	Female (n=104)
Managers	2.4	3.8
Professionals	3.1	5.8
Technicians/tradesmen	37.3	9.6
Community/personal services	8.0	41.3
Clerical/administrative	1.4	2.9
Sales	2.9	4.8
Machinery operators	9.4	0.0
Labourers	34.7	31.7
Unassigned	0.7	0.0

Note: Restricted to respondents between 18 and 64 years of age. Non-specific responses are excluded.

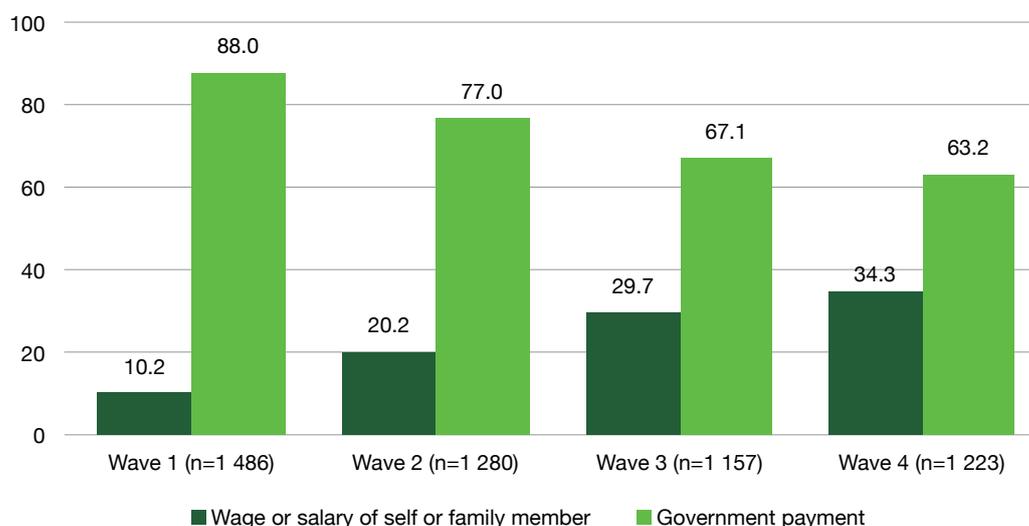
Figure 7.5-7.7 (equivalent): Paid employment by pre-arrival occupation and occupation in Australia, wave 4, per cent



Note: Total n=790 (employed n=318). Restricted to respondents between 18 and 64 years of age.

Income and financial stress

Figure 8.1: Main source of income for principal respondents by wave, per cent



Note: The response option 'other' is not shown in the figure. Non-specific responses are excluded.

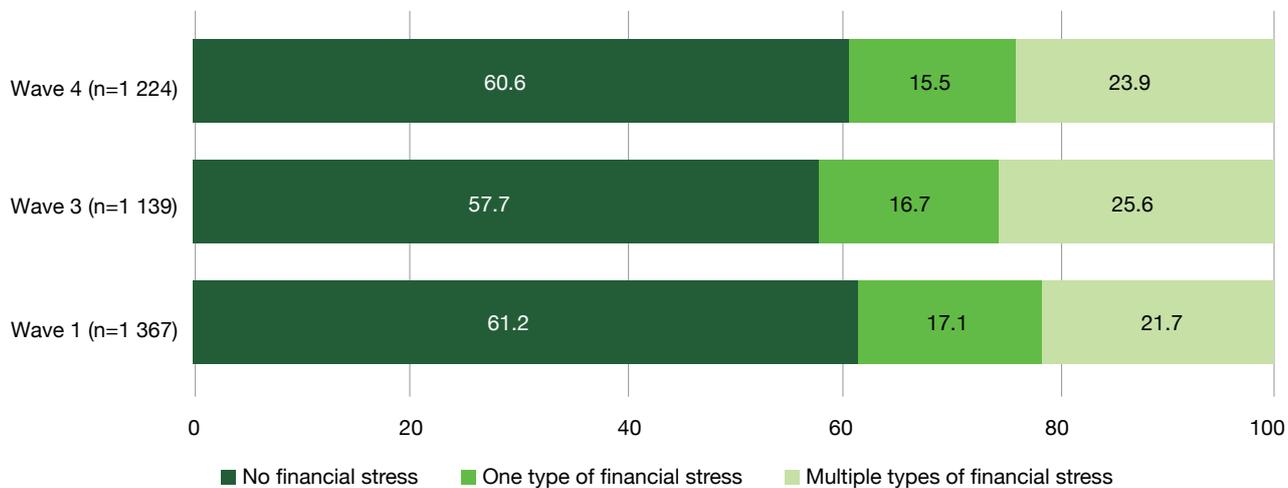
Table 8.3: Financial stress of BNLA principal respondents, waves 1, 3 and 4, per cent

Financial stress	Wave 1	Wave 3	Wave 4
Were unable to heat (or cool) the home	25.4	22.2	26.8
Could not pay gas, electricity or telephone bills on time	18.3	27.7	25.4
Sought assistance from a welfare or community organisation	15.0	19.1	11.2
Could not pay the mortgage or rent on time	12.1	13.9	12.0
Went without meals	8.2	7.0	7.5
Pawned or sold something because needed cash	5.7	7.1	6.3

Note: Wave 1 n=1,426-1,464; Wave 3 n=1,163-1,169; Wave 4 n=1,232-1,240. Non-specific responses are excluded.



Figure 8.3: BNLA principal respondents experiencing multiple types of financial stress, waves 1, 3 and 4, per cent



Health

Figure 10.1: Self-reported health rating in BNLA, all waves (balanced panel n=1 549), per cent

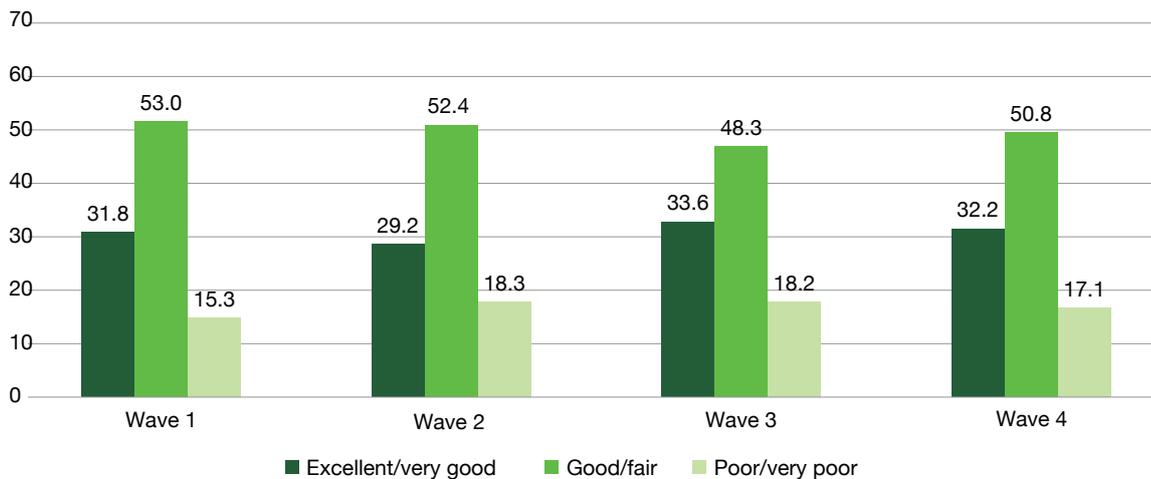


Figure 10.3 (equivalent): Self-reported health rating of BNLA males (n=833) all waves, per cent

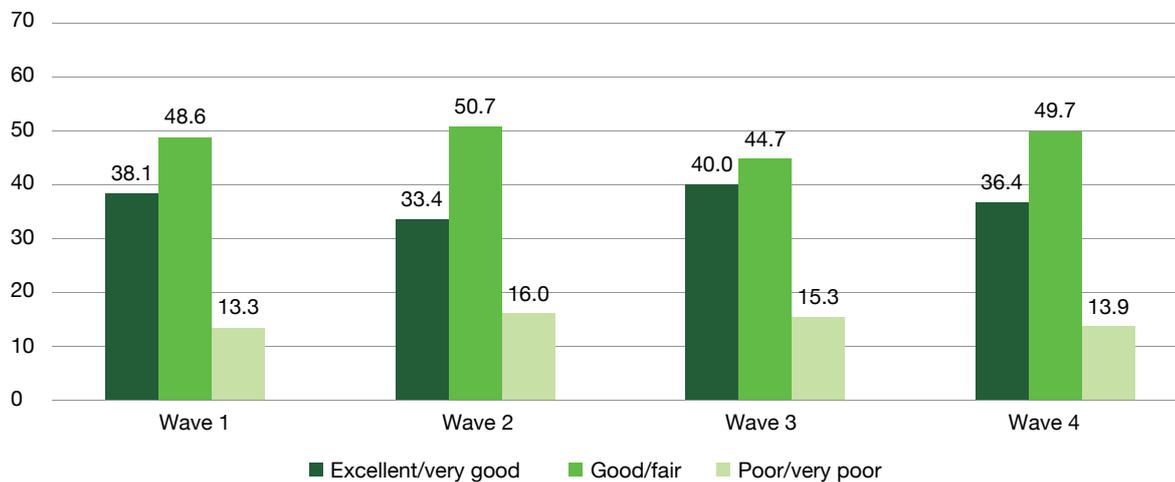
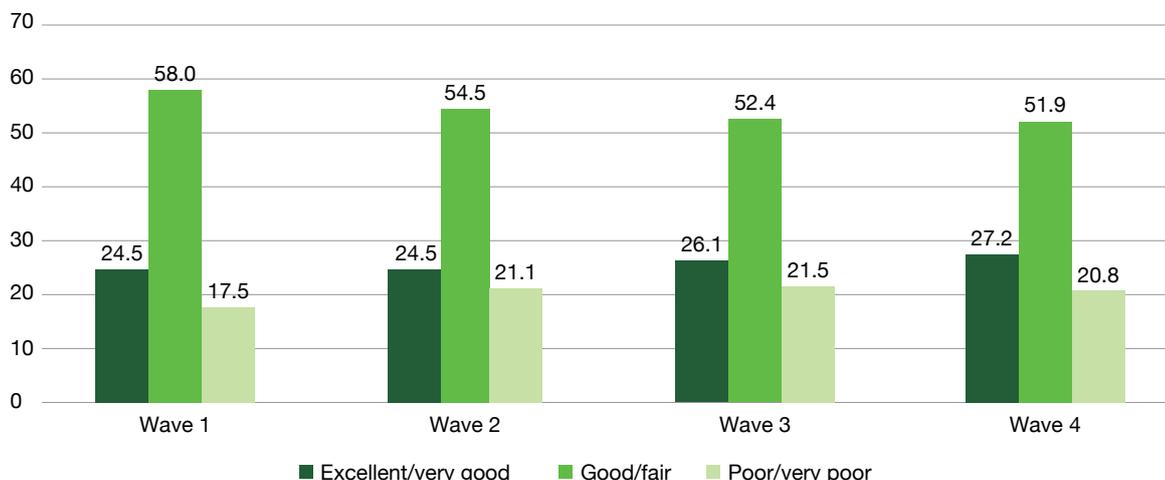


Figure 10.3 (equivalent): Self-reported health rating of BNLA females (n=716) all waves, per cent



Across all four waves, men are more likely than women to rate their health as excellent or very good, and less likely than women to rate their health as poor or very poor.

Table 10.2: High risk of serious mental health problems by gender, all waves, per cent

Wave	Men (n=786)	Women (n=670)	Total (n=1 456)
Wave 1	14.6	21.9	18.0
Wave 2	13.4	20.4	16.6
Wave 3	15.5	24.6	19.7
Wave 4	11.2	18.8	14.7

Note: Uses balanced panel of those who provided a valid response in all waves.

In all waves, women have a higher likelihood than men of having a serious mental health problem. While there has been an apparent decrease in wave 4 in the proportions for both men and women, it should be noted that proportions in waves 2 and 4 are both lower than proportions in waves 1 and 3, suggesting this may be a function of the mode of interview.

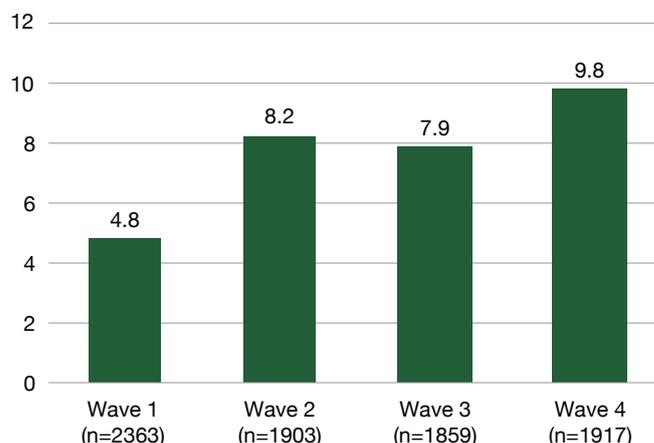
Community support and participation

Table 12.1: Whether principal respondents find it easy or very easy to interact with the Australian community, all waves, per cent

Interaction	Wave 1	Wave 2	Wave 3	Wave 4
Understanding Australian ways and culture	44.5	61.0	56.0	70.5
Making friends in Australia	37.8	45.7	49.8	60.9
Talking to Australian neighbours	24.7	Not asked	45.0	59.2

Note: As only principal respondents were asked in waves 2 and 4, data in this table were restricted to principal respondents who responded in all waves (n=957). Non-specific responses are included.

New figure 2: Has experienced discrimination in the last 12 months, all waves, per cent of all respondents (ref page 85)



Note: In wave 1 this question asked whether respondents had experienced discrimination since arrival in Australia.

