

Re-building Life After Migration Project

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Settlement Experiences of
Refugee and Migrant Youth

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We would like to acknowledge and pay our respects to the First Nations' Peoples on whose traditional lands this research was conducted. In South Australia, these lands were the unceded Country of Kaurna, Boandik, Marditjali, Potaruwutj, Ngarrindjeri and Meintangk peoples, while in California, United States of America (USA), these were the lands of Tongva, Tataviam, Serrano, Kizh and Chumash peoples. This research was also conducted in Ontario, Canada, which is part of the Treaty Lands and the Territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit. These lands include the Territory of the Anishinabek, Huron-Wendat, Haudenosaunee and Ojibway/Chippewa peoples, the land that is home to the Metis, Inuit and, most recently, the Territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation who are direct descendants of the Mississaugas of the Credit. We acknowledge that these peoples have, for countless generations, been the traditional custodians of the land, waters and sky and we pay our respects to Elders past and present.

We extend our thanks and gratitude to participants who contributed to this research. Thank you for sharing your thoughts and experiences and for giving your time so generously.

Thank you goes also to the bicultural researchers and organisational staff who worked with dedication and commitment to facilitate the research and connect with young people and families within both refugee and non-refugee migrant communities.

This research was made possible through the generous contributions of partner organisations as well as funding from the Australian Research Council through a Linkage grant (LP190100740).

Additional funding from Preventive Health South Australia (SA) contributed to the production and launch of this report.

Executive Summary

Outline of project

Global migration is a central element of the contemporary world. People migrate for economic and social reasons seeking to engage with new opportunities, but many are also forcibly displaced and migrate after refugee experiences. Regardless of the mode of migration, many hundreds of thousands of people settle in Australia, Canada and the United States of America (USA) every year. These countries all have settler-colonial histories and, to varying degrees, multicultural societies that continue to diversify with modern migration trends. These factors make them important locations for research that investigates overall settlement experiences. This project addressed this need, with a focus on young people's experiences and psychological well-being throughout settlement. The large mixed-methods study was conducted concurrently in the states of South Australia, Ontario and California in these three countries. The study provides evidence to guide development of further research as well as practices and policies to support people who are rebuilding their lives after migration.

It can be a daunting and challenging experience to settling in a new country after migration, either by refugee or non-refugee pathways. This is especially the case for young people who must navigate the process of migration and settlement while also moving through a range of developmental and relational changes during adolescence and emerging adulthood. This large-scale international project explored the experiences of young people, as well as their parents or caregivers, to understand young people's strengths and challenges, as well as the support structures that enable positive settlement experiences and well-being. The focus on young people, in combination with parent and caregiver perspectives, offered important insights into the needs of this cohort. The study findings have implications for policy makers and practitioners working in a range of sectors globally.

This project was an in-depth investigation of the experiences of young people from refugee and non-refugee migrant backgrounds settled in Australia, Canada and the United States of America (USA). It explored the diverse contexts of migration to inform knowledge and provide evidence to improve experiences of settlement and psychological well-being. The research was designed with the intention to advocate for young people and families in settlement contexts and to serve as a transformative evidence base to improve systems that impact their settlement and well-being.

Project aims and methodology

Using a mixed-methods approach, the study was conducted in three locations: South Australia (Australia), Ontario (Canada) and Los Angeles County, California (USA). In-depth surveys were conducted with young people from refugee and non-refugee migrant backgrounds. The survey data were collected from 1,201 young people aged predominantly 15–24, with most having migrated to one of these three countries over the past 1–15 years. Most participants in the study had migrated from four key regions: the Middle East and North Africa; Sub-Saharan Africa; Latin America and the Caribbean; and South, South-East and East Asia. Focus groups with the same population cohort were conducted in each location, as well as separate focus groups with parents or caregivers with similar backgrounds. Overall, 56 focus groups were conducted, comprising 38 groups of young people and 18 parent/caregiver groups.

The study aimed to broadly explore migration and settlement experiences; to identify contextual factors that young people and their families identified as relevant for settlement and psychological well-being; and to examine the relationships between successful settlement and well-being. The study investigated the nature, scope and effectiveness of support services currently accessed by young people and their families. Importantly, the project was conducted with the aim of effectively communicating and disseminating findings to impact policy makers and service providers across settlement, mental health and social services sectors, and to position future research in the field of settlement.

Key Findings

The study offered important insights and information regarding the migration and settlement experiences of young people and their families. Most participants were forming new social bonds with people in their new countries and finding ways to develop a sense of connection and belonging. Young people had high aspirations to engage with educational pathways and tertiary study, and many wanted to provide for their families and to reciprocate the family support they felt they had received. Parents and caregivers were especially pleased for the opportunities that their children would have in the new country.

Family relationships were critically important to young people's well-being, as indicated by both young people and their parents/caregivers. Family members provided emotional and practical supports to one another to cope with the challenges of migration and settlement. However, separation from loved ones was a big challenge, causing stress to some participants who missed the people left behind during migration. This was especially the case for people with refugee experiences who were acutely experiencing stress and worry for the safety of family members.

Developing a sense of belonging and identity was important for young people. Many grappled with the challenges of racism and discrimination, as well as other settlement challenges of learning new systems and (for many) a new language. These challenges were significant across the contexts of all three countries, with some differences for people from refugee or non-refugee migrant backgrounds, as well as some differences overall between the countries of settlement. Notably, perceptions of discrimination increased over time for young people in Australia and in the USA, with young people reporting higher levels of discrimination as the length of their settlement increased. However, having a strong sense of identification with both the national culture and with one's ethnic community played a protective role and was associated with positive well-being. Young people showed a range of strengths and varied coping strategies to help them through these challenges. In the focus groups, participants spoke of these challenges, but also of the positive aspects of settling in the three countries, with many highlighting their gratitude and motivation to engage with the opportunities, the freedoms and the improved access to human rights.

Young people settling after migration are a highly diverse group, facing a range of pre- and post-migration challenges. However, they are also highly motivated to build connections and engage with opportunities for education, socialising and employment pathways in the new country. Young people from migration backgrounds have a range of strengths including multilingual skills and the ability to effectively navigate different cultural contexts as they move between their family or community environments and the broader public sphere. Policies and services designed to support healthy and positive settlement experiences and outcomes can build on the strengths of young people and their families.

Summary of Recommendations

Recommendations for policy development

- Systematic and long-term English language support for those who need it among refugee and non-refugee migrant young people and their families
- Better developed and implemented public policy to support anti-racism and anti-discrimination practices at a society level, as well as specifically within workplaces, schools and teaching/learning institutions
- Pathways to meaningful employment
- Prioritisation of family reunion visas and associated processes
- Immigration status regularisation program, allowing those living precariously including asylum seekers/refugee claimants, international students and others on temporary visas to become permanent residents
- Continuing the empowerment of refugees to lead lives of visibility and human dignity with a greater degree of fulfilment.

Recommendations for practice

- Determining how educational institutions can ensure adequate support for young people and develop more connections with their families
- Determining how service providers can work with young people to normalise help-seeking behaviours and reduce stigma
- Easily accessible and low-cost mental health support for young people
- Special welcoming programs for newcomers to raise awareness of services available
- Building capacities of migrant families, young people and their communities
- Developing mental health and other supports available to young people within high schools or universities
- Providing ongoing practical support to migrant families in need, to ease the burden on young people
- Continuing awareness raising and community education to reduce the stigma of seeking mental health support.

Recommendations for future research

- Longitudinal research for a comprehensive understanding of young people's experiences over time (e.g., identity development, sense of belonging, education, employment, family dynamics, etc.)
- Further research on how labelling (e.g., 'refugee'), can impact racism, discrimination and government policy
- Conducting similar research projects with temporary migrants (e.g., asylum seekers/refugee claimants, temporary residents and undocumented persons)
- A more in-depth and targeted investigation focusing on help-seeking behaviours of refugee and non-refugee migrant young people.

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List of Abbreviations

AI	artificial intelligence
AMRC	Australian Migrant Resource Centre
APA	American Psychological Association
CALD	culturally and linguistically diverse
CoNGO	Conference of NGOs (UN)
DSW	Doctor of Social Work
ECOSOC	Economic and Social Council (UN)
FG	focus group
GP	general practitioner
GPA	grade point average
IMCES	Institute for Multicultural Counseling & Education Services (USA)
IRCC	Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada
LGBTQ	lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning persons
MA	Master of Arts
MP	Member of Parliament
MYSA	Multicultural Youth of South Australia
NCP	Newcomer Centre of Peel (Canada)
NDIS	National Disability Insurance Scheme
NGO	non-governmental organisation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PCUN	Psychology Coalition at the United Nations
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
RTO	registered training organisation
SA	South Australia
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
US/USA	United States/United States of America

Hon Chris Picton, MP

South Australian Minister for Health and Wellbeing

With 430,000 South Australians being born overseas from about 200 countries speaking almost 250 languages the needs of the CALD community are an important factor in improving the health and wellbeing of South Australians.

Ensuring we understand the experiences of our new migrants and refugees who settle here in South Australia helps inform these improvements.

Research and data like this report provides a greater understanding to all those who work with new immigrants including those from refugee backgrounds and their communities and contributes to making progress on achieving health equity.

This report is as a result of the work by the Re-building Life After Migration research team with the research team using a bilingual approach enabling rich and effective data collection, especially in South Australia where the most data was collected of the three states/provinces.

The inclusion of interviews with parents and caregivers provides valuable context to understand the broader family perspective, in understanding the strengths and challenges faced and how to build in protective factors for families after migration to enable positive settlement experience and wellbeing.

Developmentally, the transition from child to adulthood can be a challenging time for young people, particularly impacting their mental health and wellbeing. With the added complexities of adjusting to a new country, new systems, and potentially new language, we have an opportunity to make the transition as seamless as possible.

Hon Chris Picton MP

South Australian Minister for Health and Wellbeing



Harold Takooshian, PhD, Treasurer, takoosh@aol.com
Elaine P. Congress, DSW, MA, Book Series Editor, Congress@fodham.edu

In today's world, we continue to see huge waves of cross-national migration sweep across all parts of the planet—sometimes for positive reasons, but more often not. In either case, we ask “What can society and governments do to ease the transition, to benefit both the migrants and their new host nation?” Today governments and United Nations agencies naturally seek effective answers to this important question.

This new report on “Re-building life after migration” in 2024 is now set to be a “MUST READ” for policy-makers in several ways. (1) This report provides clear and concise details on the challenges of migration, blending data with narrative that can be easily understood by all. (2) It is produced by a collaboration of 14 experts in 7 agencies across three nations—Australia, Canada, USA. (3) It collects and analyzes important new survey data from 1,201 young migrants from diverse nations, ages 15-24. (4) It offers data-based recommendations to policy-makers, based on past and current research.

The significance of this international study is well aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations.

In our capacity as Representatives of the Institute for Multicultural Counseling & Education Services (IMCES) at the United Nations, our liaison status is designed to promote information exchange and bringing people and issues together to promote collective action for a sustainable world. IMCES, the U.S. representative of this international research project, has been contributing to the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations for many years, specifically good health and wellbeing, quality education, and reduced inequalities. IMCES's commitment to their mission of human rights & social justice is well demonstrated through their engagement in this international study to promote equity among migrant and refugee youth in the community and globally.

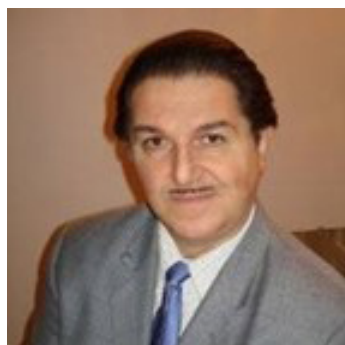
As psychological scientists working with the Psychology Coalition at the United Nations (PCUN), our mission as is to offer data-based solutions to address the many global problems facing the United Nations, including migration.

What future faces young migrants, ages 15-24? Will they become victims of the many sex-trafficking rings, or the brilliant leaders of tomorrow? Much of their future rests in the hands of today's policy-makers, who will benefit from recommendations in this bold new report.

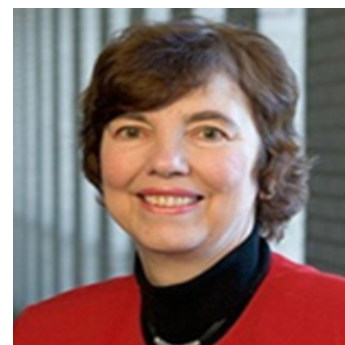
Officers of PCUN: Psychology Coalition of NGOs at the United Nations

Having Consultative Status with ECOSOC | Representative of IMCES, an NGO with ECOSOC consultative status at the UN www.psychologycoalitionun.org

Harold Takooshian, PhD,



Elaine Congress, DSW



Lindsey P Horvath, Chair
Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, Third District

“As the Chair of the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, I enthusiastically recognize the importance of the research project ‘Rebuilding Life after Migration’.

This research study is considered an essential tool in providing informed decision-making in strategic planning for policy makers, educators, practitioners, and the community at large.

This project’s international efforts have produced effective results, highlighting the experiences of refugee and migrant youth settling into their diverse communities in three countries: the U.S., Canada, and Australia.

Specifically, I would like to acknowledge the significant efforts and contributions of the Institute for Multicultural Counseling & Education Services (IMCES) in collecting meaningful data from the immigrant and refugee populations in Los Angeles County. IMCES has been providing health and mental health services to the communities of Los Angeles County for over 35 years, saving and improving the lives of thousands of our citizens, including migrant and refugee populations. Their collaborative effort in this research project demonstrates their commitment to their mission of promoting social justice and human rights based on IMCES’s value-driven, outcome-based approach.

Historically, Los Angeles County has been recognized as a microcosm of the world and the home for refugees and immigrants with diverse cultural backgrounds.

Relevant research, such as this project, can support identifying the resources, access, and opportunities required for these populations to thrive in our community.

I strongly believe the evidence and guidance provided by the project “Rebuilding Life after Migration” will contribute to a more supportive and equitable environment for diverse populations throughout our local community in Los Angeles as well as national and international contexts.

This type of evidence-based research and its relevant recommendations would facilitate the opportunity for our community leaders to promote and provide sustainable and necessary change.”



Lindsey P. Horvath
Chair, Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors
Third District



Partner organisations

This project was managed by a large international team of researchers and expert service providers (see p. ii). The research brought together internationally recognised experts in immigration, settlement, acculturation and multicultural mental health, multicultural service delivery, behavioural and cultural issues, and epidemiology.

University researchers from the University of South Australia, the University of Adelaide and the University of Technology Sydney worked together with field expert leaders from key partner organisations. Partner organisations in Australia were the Australian Migrant Resource Centre (AMRC) and Multicultural Youth South Australia (MYSA); in Canada, the Newcomer Centre of Peel; and, in the USA, the Institute for Multicultural Counseling^a and Education Services (IMCES).

AUSTRALIA

Australian Migrant Resource Centre (AMRC)



Summary of services

The Australian Migrant Resource Centre (AMRC) specialises in humanitarian and migrant settlement, and community capacity building and development. By assisting to build community, the AMRC supports new arrivals and their communities to engage with and contribute effectively to South Australia's society, culture, economy and environment.

The AMRC was established in 1979, and since then has resettled new arrivals from all continents, assisting them to adjust to life in Australia, to become independent and to develop linkages with their local ethnic communities and the broader SA community.

Overview of services and programs

Settlement and community services:

- Supporting new humanitarian arrivals in their settlement journey through the Humanitarian Settlement Program (HSP) and Specialised Intensive Services (SIS)
- Tailored support through the Settlement Engagement and Transition Support (SETS) program, addressing various needs including domestic violence and community capacity building.
- Migration support through the Community Support Program (CSP)
- Settlement and other supports to skilled migrants

Specialist services: Tailored support is offered for families, women, children, youth, communities and individuals facing challenges. Assistance is provided with accommodation, and access to health care, training and employment to ensure holistic support.

Aged home care: As a registered provider, AMRC offers essential home care assistance and support services for elderly individuals aged 65 and over, promoting their well-being and independence.

National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS): As a registered NDIS provider, AMRC delivers empowerment programs and support services to individuals with disabilities, fostering their inclusion and participation in society.

Training and Employment: Through its registered training organisation (RTO), AMRC facilitates employment opportunities for migrants and refugees by providing assessment, referral, job preparation and training services, including English language classes and industry partnerships. Opportunities are also provided to individuals interested in supporting AMRC programs and services through in-house work experience, accredited training and volunteering, fostering a culture of community involvement and contribution.

Community development and engagement: AMRC provides programs and initiatives focusing on women's empowerment, youth leadership, arts, culture and sports, promoting social cohesion and community participation.

Advocacy, research, and service development: AMRC's active involvement in research collaborations and committee participation contributes to the advancement of public policy and service development, ensuring the needs of migrant and refugee communities are recognised and effectively addressed. AMRC is proud to be a partner with the University of South Australia et al. in the "Rebuilding Life After Migration: Settlement Experiences of Refugee and Migrant Youth" research project. The study's aim is to provide settlement service providers with crucial knowledge on how to foster young people's well-being.

With seven outlets across South Australia, two in metropolitan areas and five in regional areas (Mt Gambier, Naracoorte, Bordertown, Murray Bridge and Whyalla), AMRC's commitment to providing holistic support ensures that individuals and families from migrant and refugee backgrounds receive the assistance they need to thrive in their new communities. www.amrc.org.au



AUSTRALIA

Multicultural Youth of South Australia (MYSA)



Multicultural Youth South Australia Inc (MYSA) is the state representative advisory, advocacy and service delivery body for multicultural young people aged between 10 and 35 years. It is the only youth-specific multicultural agency in South Australia, and one of two leading youth-specific agencies in Australia. A multi-award-winning youth service provider, MYSA is recognised locally and nationally for its leadership on youth issues. Its three key areas of work are: (1) direct service delivery; (2) research, policy and advocacy; and (3) sector development and capacity building. MYSA currently supports approximately 4,000 clients per year through a range of programs and initiatives including:

Individualised support: based on international evidence and the National Youth Settlement Framework, which MYSA co-authored.

Onsite psychologists: therapeutic interventions and assessments for young people to access additional support (e.g., the National Disability Insurance Scheme [NDIS]).

Youth-focused group programs: fostering English language acquisition and building social connections.

Mums and bubs parenting programs: including multicultural playgroups, Circle of Security training and monthly excursions.

Social enterprise: MYSA owns and operates Miss MYSA Events (MME), an event management social enterprise. Through MME, youth receive six months of paid employment, as well as hands-on training, work experience, networks, references and transferable social, interpersonal, practical and job-readiness skills. (see <https://www.missmysaevents.com.au/>)

Driving youth to employment: this innovative volunteer driving program supports newly-arrived young people to build up their driving hours, obtain their licences and find employment.

Cultural awareness training: delivered to various service delivery providers (e.g., mental health practitioners, nurses and hospital staff, foster carers, residential care workers, financial counsellors, teachers and other practitioners) working with young people and families from refugee and migrant backgrounds.

Advice to government: MYSA regularly provides comprehensive advice to government at state and national levels to inform policy decisions. This includes responding to calls for submissions, as well as coordinating youth consultations and ensuring the voices of young people from multicultural backgrounds are heard.

Research: For over 20 years, MYSA has partnered with universities in South Australia and other states on projects that provide clear, accessible and practical information to improve settlement outcomes for youth and young families.

Service collaboration: MYSA works collaboratively with the South Australian settlement sector and the broader community, as well as government, non-government, academic and private sectors to improve service responsiveness to the unique needs of young people and families from refugee and migrant backgrounds

<https://www.mysa.com.au/>

Newcomer Centre of Peel (NCP)

The Newcomer Centre of Peel (NCP) is a multi-service charitable non-profit organisation that assists the entire newcomer family in achieving settlement and integration within the Region of Peel, Canada, and beyond. With experience and expertise in English language training; employment; business start-up; and comprehensive settlement services, including programs for women, youth and seniors, NCP is dedicated to service quality. Through innovation and a progressive attitude, NCP leverages the broad experience of staff and community partners to overcome settlement barriers.

Striving for equal access to opportunities, NCP enables immigrants to connect to the enduring values and principles of what defines Canada. Working with funding from Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), NCP hopes to foster loyalty towards Canada from new immigrants and their families. This is encouraged by providing a variety of holistic services in a friendly and open atmosphere. NCP's vision, achieved by working together, is to create an inclusive community where everyone feels represented.

Mission Statement

We assist newcomers in achieving their goals by providing the highest quality of settlement services with an individualised approach.

Effat Ghassemi, Executive Director

With a fierce commitment to the empowerment of immigrant and refugee communities, Effat Ghassemi has strived to create a beacon of hope through NCP since 1988. Her journey is rooted in a profound dedication to enhancing the lives of newcomers in Canada. It is a narrative of relentless service, advocacy and leadership. At the core of Effat's mission lies the dream of shaping a welcoming community in Mississauga, a dream that she continues to bring into reality through her innovative strategies for settlement and integration. Effat's story is one of courage and challenge, similarly faced by thousands of immigrant families seeking a new beginning. Through compassionate guidance, Effat has developed an agency that is proficient at steering newcomers towards fulfilling futures in Canada. Being assisted in employment, entrepreneurship, education and settlement, families are able to build a sustainable future for following generations. Her commitment extends beyond the tangible, as she champions the causes of gender equality and racial harmony, tirelessly working to knit together the fabric of social inclusion and innovation. Her leadership and foresight have earned her esteemed positions on advisory committees that shape the future, including the Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI) and the Peel Newcomer Strategy Group (PNSG). Effat's influence is a testament to her belief in collaboration and shared vision, making her a revered mentor and an inspirational figure in immigrant communities and beyond. Holding a Master's degree in Immigration and Settlement Studies, Effat's academic background provides a solid foundation for her pioneering work. However, it is her unwavering spirit and genuine empathy that truly define her legacy. Effat Ghassemi is not only an Executive Director; she is a visionary and a leader, propelling NCP toward a world where every newcomer is greeted with opportunity and open arms.

A Unified Effort in Understanding and Supporting Newcomer Youth: Insights from Canada

Dear Research Collaborators,

As the Executive Director of the Newcomer Centre of Peel and a proud collaborator in this significant international research initiative, I extend our heartfelt gratitude to our Australian and American colleagues. Your dedication to exploring the settlement journeys of newcomer youth significantly contributes to a global understanding of, and support network for, these resilient individuals.

Canada's participation in this study, particularly through the collection of over 300 surveys, underscores our commitment to understanding the nuanced experiences of migrant and refugee youth. At the Newcomer Centre of Peel, we expanded our outreach, inviting migrant and asylum-seeking youth and their families to partake in focused discussions. These dialogues allowed a deeper exploration into their resettlement processes, highlighting the challenges and triumphs encountered upon their arrival in Ontario, Canada.

Our findings illuminated the profound impact of Canada's immigration policies and its Multiculturalism Act 1988 in facilitating smoother transitions for newcomers. The stories shared by participants underscored the importance of creating supportive and inclusive environments that celebrate diversity and foster equitable opportunities.

This research lays a foundational step toward informing policy makers. The insights gained call for a reflective review of existing policies, encourage the formulation of new strategies and guide the implementation of evidence-based decisions aimed at enhancing the settlement experience of migrant and refugee youth. Canada's commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion is unwavering: through this collaborative effort, we aim to strengthen our communities, making them truly welcoming spaces for all.

The path forward is clear: continued research, open dialogue and collective action are essential in supporting the integration and success of newcomer youth. We look forward to further collaboration, sharing insights and jointly advocating for policies that uphold the principles of diversity and inclusion.

Together, we are not just studying migration: we are building bridges that connect lives and foster communities where everyone can thrive.

Effat Ghassemi

Executive Director, Newcomer Centre of Peel, Ontario, Canada

Research Collaborator

<https://www.ncpeel.ca/>



UNITED STATES OF AMERICA



Institute for Multicultural Counseling & Education Services (IMCES)

About IMCES

The Institute for Multicultural Counseling & Education Services (IMCES) is a private non-profit organisation in Los Angeles, California, founded by Tara Pir PhD in 1989 with the mission of promoting human rights and social justice in two distinct domains. IMCES contributes to the wellness of our community by providing direct health and mental health services to under-resourced, diverse target populations across Los Angeles County, the highest populated county in the United States, often referred to as a “microcosm of the world”. In parallel, IMCES contributes to the advancement of the profession and discipline by providing workforce development/clinical training programs for mental health professionals of all disciplines.

Direct health and mental health services

IMCES mental health services are designed with the philosophy of promoting health and well-being. They are comprehensively integrated to include health, mental health, legal advocacy, social health, and other supportive services. These services are designed for all underserved, culturally diverse groups with mental health challenges across the spectrum of severity, from prevention and early intervention (PEI); moderate mental illness (MMI); and severe mental illness (SMI). Prevention and early intervention (PEI) services include outreach and mental health advocacy in the community and school-based mental health services, as well as our PIER Model program for the early detection and prevention of psychosis for youth and young adults. Moderate mental illness (MMI) services include our outpatient care services (OCS) that aim to reintegrate our clients into the community by providing community-based services for their well-being. Severe mental illness (SMI) services include programs for both adults and children. Adult programs include our Full Service Partnership (FSP) program that is designed to be an intensive field-based program. For youth, we provide a Wraparound program that is a comprehensive family-based approach that provides field-based intensive services. In addition to our mental health programs, IMCES also provides legal and supportive services in our Domestic Violence Intervention program for individuals who have been exposed to domestic violence. All our programs are designed based on the principles of diversity, equity and inclusion to be responsive to the complex and ever-changing needs of our underserved culturally diverse communities.

Clinical training programs

IMCES provides American Psychological Association (APA)-accredited clinical training programs on health psychology for doctoral interns and postdoctoral residents. Our outcomes-based clinical training program is futuristic and designed to develop specific competencies, with a strong emphasis on many aspects of leadership development. We are training our profession's next leaders who will contribute to the advancement of our profession as well as to the health and well-being of communities at local and global levels.

IMCES promotes its mission of human rights and social justice in local, national and global domains. IMCES has Consultative Status with the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and is a member of the Conference of NGOs (CoNGO) in a Consultative Relationship with the UN (United Nations). IMCES and, specifically its founder, Dr Tara Pir, conduct ongoing research, advocacy projects and professional presentations in local, national and international domains.

<https://www.imces.org/>



Dr. Pir with IMCES Staff Representing Categories of Services, Goal, and Mission



IMCES Presents
**APA Accredited Doctoral Internship Program
 Graduation Ceremony**
 2022-2023 Cohort



Remarks from Dr. Tara Pir, Founder & CEO

We are proud to present the successful outcome of our clinical training program based in the foundation of humanity and structured to cultivate the futuristic notion of health in the public service domain. Our training is rooted in leadership development, and our graduates learned to use the motivation of compassion for self and others to be able to recalibrate and adjust to the ever-changing needs of our community. We claim our graduates are considered to be the next leaders of our profession and discipline!

Guest Speakers

				
Kathryn Barger Los Angeles County Supervisor	Hilda Solis Los Angeles County Supervisor	Dr. Tahereh Ziaian International Research Collaborator- Australia	Dr. Harold Takooshian Psychology Professor IMCES UN Representative	Dr. David Marcotte Psychology Professor IMCES UN Representative

Institute for Multicultural Counseling & Education Services

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Background

Understanding the factors that promote the successful settlement of people after migration is a pressing need internationally. A socially inclusive and productive society strives to support all members of that society and enables equitable participation in social institutions, such as education and employment. However, it is widely known that migration and its accompanying stressors can have long-term effects on settlement and psychological well-being.

When migrating as children or adolescents, young people experience the transition to a new home, with the accompanying opportunities and challenges while, at the same time, experiencing developmental changes during adolescence and emerging adulthood. Understanding the strengths of young people from migration backgrounds and the challenges they face is critical for the development of effective social policies within settlement countries [1]. Multiple risks to the well-being of young people after migration have been attributed to migration and acculturation processes, including difficulty in negotiating a new culture and systems; pre-migration experiences of trauma; loss of familiar support systems and networks; grief and loss; identity confusion; intergenerational conflict; school adjustment problems; and low social participation [2-5].

Young people need access to strong support systems after migration as they negotiate the challenges associated with resettlement and cultural transition, face the developmental issues common to all young people and manage the concerns unique to them [6]. Available research has suggested that most of these young people do not access mental health and support services [4, 5, 7, 8], although only limited research has been conducted to determine their usage patterns [e.g., 9]. Access to services for mental health support is particularly challenging due to a range of barriers for people from migrant communities, for example, stigma. Although specialised multicultural services are working effectively to counter these barriers through outreach and culturally responsive support, the need for policy and funding that attend to the needs of communities from migration backgrounds has still not been addressed [9-11]. Although some research has identified promising or emerging practice to support the well-being of young people from migration backgrounds, further research that takes a mixed-methods approach is needed that includes young people and their families in the research design [12]. Our project addressed this need. The research reported herein investigated the nature and scope of service utilisation^b for a wide range of psychosocial, familial and cultural problems by young people and their families after migration, thereby providing a more comprehensive knowledge base from which to improve service provision. The study also explored the use of informal supports as it is often assumed that immigrant populations prefer to manage problems within these networks [13, 14].

This project is particularly important due to the size and scale of global migration which, after a short interruption during the COVID-19 pandemic, continues to grow from 2.8% of the global population in 2020 to 3.6% by 2022, equating to 281 million people [15]. In the 30 years leading up to the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, a 44% increase occurred in migrant populations of young people worldwide, with nearly 32 million migrant young people making up 11% of the total migrant population in 2020 [16]. In total, 35.5 million migrant children were under the age of 18 in 2020, making up 13% of the total migrant population. Within that group, children with refugee backgrounds represented a much larger proportion of the total refugee population at a striking 46% of all refugees [17]. With forcible displacement predicted to reach nearly 131 million people during 2024 [18], addressing the needs of children and young people from refugee backgrounds, as well as their non-refugee migrant peers, is critical.

¹ We use the term 'youth' to refer to young people aged 15–24 years as defined by the United Nations (UN). However, various data have been collected globally and regionally regarding children and young people which can limit the understanding of young people's experiences and trends.

Countries, such as Australia, Canada and the United States of America (USA) as major destination countries for migration, play a key role in providing positive outcomes for migrants, which can be mutually beneficial for those who migrate and for the whole society [19]. Locations for this study were chosen due to the high rates of immigration, particularly in the states in which the study was conducted, namely, in South Australia, Australia; Ontario, Canada; and, Los Angeles County, California, United States of America (USA).

In the most recent Australian census of 2021, more than half the Australian population comprised people who either migrated themselves (30% of the whole population) or who had at least one parent from a migrant background (22%) [20]. Since then, 2022–2023 saw more than 700,000 people migrate to Australia, a marked increase from the COVID-19 pandemic years when Australian borders were closed to many, and also an increase from pre-COVID-19 pandemic numbers [21]. Much of the migration to Australia in recent years has been via temporary visas for work or study, with the intention during 2023–2024 to offer 190,000 permanent visas, similar to pre-COVID-19 pandemic levels [22]. Australia has had high levels of immigration since invasion and colonisation but, for the first time in its history, net migration reduced during the COVID-19 pandemic when strict border closures were implemented. Repercussions of these changes persist to the current time with some immigration reforms aiming to promote skilled migration, while also including refugee resettlement [23]. Like the USA, Australia saw a reduction in refugee resettlement numbers over several years due in part to the government at the time, with this then followed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Recently, the new government reintroduced higher quotas for refugee resettlement, with over 17,000 people arriving during 2022 [24]. Australia has provided refugee resettlement for decades, being rated on a per capita basis as the second highest resettlement country after Canada in 2022 [25]. However, this should be noted in the context of the highly punitive treatment of people seeking asylum [26], as well as within the broader figures which show that the vast majority of refugees live in their neighbouring countries of first asylum (such as Türkiye and Iran), with resettlement playing a very small (around 1%) but important role in meeting refugee needs globally. Multicultural communities in South Australia (SA) are from diverse backgrounds [27], with the state's population growth due to international immigration relatively high as a proportion of the total population of 1.8 million people in comparison to the other Australian states and territories [28]. The rate of migration to SA via humanitarian visas is also relatively high, with SA having less than 8% of the Australian population while being home to nearly 9% of people resettling from refugee backgrounds [29].

Canada is also a country with a high level of immigration: in 2021, people from migrant backgrounds made up nearly one quarter of the total population [30]. Following migration challenges faced during the initial onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, Canada recorded the highest immigration levels in its history, with over 400,000 people granted permanent residency in 2021 and close to 500,000 people immigrating in the 2021–2022 financial year [31]. This trend is continuing with an ongoing government goal of 500,000 during 2025, with this including a specific focus on increasing refugee immigration and improving migration processing systems to cope with increased flows [32]. In the few years leading up to 2022, Canada received the largest number of refugees via the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) resettlement scheme [24]. Population estimates have suggested that, by 2041, Canada will have more than half of its population either from a migrant background or with at least one parent from a migrant background [33]. In the 2021 Canadian census, around 30% of the state of Ontario's population were from a migrant background, compared to 23% for Canada as a whole, with Toronto having almost half of its population from a migrant background (i.e., nearly 1.3 million people) [34].

The USA hosts the largest population of international migrants, about 20% of the total global migrant population, which was approximately 51 million people in 2020 at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic [35, 36], and similarly the largest group of children from migrant backgrounds at 3.3 million [17]. Overall, the immigrant population in the USA at that time was close to 14% of the total USA population, most of whom were naturalised citizens or permanent residents, with the remainder either undocumented/unauthorised immigrants (23% of the total immigrant population) or temporary residents (5%) [37]. In 2022, more than one million migrants were granted permanent residency [35]. The USA has historically provided resettlement to the highest number of refugees each year; however, this trend reduced in recent years under changes in government immigration policy, followed by the COVID-19 pandemic, when Canada overtook the USA as having the highest number of refugees each year [24]. Although the US trend has since increased again with the largest intake since 2017 seen in 2023, these figures are still well below the average of 73,000 people annually since 1980 when the resettlement program began [38]. Within the USA, the state of California is home to the largest group at 10.4 million refugees, with 4.2 million living in Los Angeles in 2022 [35].

This project, the first of its kind undertaken in Australia, Canada and the USA, is one of the largest and most comprehensive studies in the world. Most studies of young people are as follows: small in scale; restricted to a single cultural group; focused on either people from a refugee or a non-refugee migrant background; include only the voices of adults; have a single area of investigation; and lacking a theoretical base. The present research addresses these limitations by collecting data from many young people drawn from several ethnic communities; including people from refugee as well as non-refugee migrant backgrounds; covering four major areas of investigation; and grounding the investigation in theory. The research includes sizeable samples from each population group, providing the rare opportunity to make comparisons within a single study. Strong partnerships between university and industry were critical for this project, as was the bilingual approach used to connect with participant communities and during data collection. This complex project was designed to draw on the strengths of these relationships and the expertise across all organisations and investigators, while working together with bilingual staff and communities [14, 39].

Our integrated approach argues that settlement trajectories and outcomes are influenced by the extent to which young people experience opportunities to achieve their goals compared to structural barriers that limit these opportunities. In accord with this model, the first aim of the research was to identify contextual factors that influence settlement and well-being [40, 41], focusing on three contextual factors that differ across groups and individuals: (1) experience, knowledge, strengths and aspirations; (2) context in the host country; and (3) responsiveness of the host community to the individual and group [40], as overall settlement and well-being can be affected by these factors.

The support needs of young people from refugee and non-refugee migrant backgrounds differ widely according to pre- and post-migration context and other factors [42]. Understanding the nature and extent of these differences is important for policy, service provision and the extension of theory. The multi-country focus in this study allowed us to investigate local, national and international trends, with the findings being of direct relevance to all countries in the study as well as to other countries with high levels of immigration.

A note on terminology and language

This study focused on the experiences of young people and their families after migration to the three countries. Although some findings herein report trends for young people from refugee and non-refugee migrant backgrounds, limitations apply to these terms in relation to their value. We note here that not all people who have refugee-related lived experience migrate via humanitarian visas or pathways. Even for those who migrate via humanitarian pathways, they may not identify with the term ‘refugee’ nor feel safe to reveal this information if they do. For example, some people, for safety reasons, may avoid identifying themselves as a refugee or immigrant, given the political climate in a particular location, during that specific time. These complex issues are played out in different ways in the three different country contexts.

Canada has been facing a new wave of young refugees who initially came as international students hoping to study and work in Ontario. However, life became so difficult after the COVID-19 pandemic that they could no longer afford to continue their studies, leading them to seek refugee status. This is a new phenomenon. It is connected to the legislation and public policies of the federal Canadian government and had led to uncertainty for many people. The term ‘refugee’ has recently been changed, attracting advocacy groups that are lobbying the government to pass a new law on immigration status regularisation.

Hence, although this report uses the term ‘refugee’ and the research findings are reflective of refugee and non-refugee migration in general, our intention is that the report and research findings are to be considered with these nuances in mind.



Photo by AMRC

Project Overview

This project aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the settlement experiences of young people from refugee and non-refugee migrant backgrounds, the impact of these experiences on their psychological well-being and the role of support services. It focused on the policies and practices that shape settlement experiences which promote the psychological well-being of young people. See Methods section for more detail on the project's aims.

The project also focused on service utilisation, specifically, the patterns of service use by young people aged 15–24 years. This provided unique information for specialist mental health and social service providers, as well as for mainstream service providers, to improve service responsiveness and provision to refugee and migrant communities.

This collaborative work aimed to apply a combination of research dissemination strategies to maximise the impact on service providers, policy makers and researchers working in the field of settlement and mental health.

In this type of research, it is critical to foster and maintain long-term research alliances with key local and international settlement organisations. This contributes to:

- fostering research that is engaged, relevant and responsive to community needs;
- building a solid evidence-base for national policy and practice (in Australia, Canada and the USA) for successful settlement, social participation and integration of young people and communities after migration; and,
- promoting the dissemination and translation of research findings for practical utilisation by multicultural and social services sectors.

The study provides settlement sectors and service providers with crucial new knowledge on how settlement policies and practices can foster refugee and migrant psychological well-being.

Development of this report has been undertaken with the intention of guiding responsive and effective policy and practice in settlement and social services to improve psychological well-being outcomes for immigrant communities.

Photo by MYSA



Methods

This research was guided by the transformative advocacy paradigm [43] which is ideal for researchers working in culturally complex communities with the aim of improving social conditions and outcomes for marginalised populations [44]. This approach places priority on the lived experience of individuals and groups, adopting a transformative lens that sees action as an important outcome of research [43, 44]. Therefore, this project was conducted with the view to improve conditions for refugees and migrants throughout settlement via researchers' advocacy activities with policy makers, service planners, professionals and others strategically placed to make changes.

A sequential mixed-methods approach (see Figure 1) was employed within the transformative advocacy framework. We first conducted a survey targeting young people from refugee and non-refugee migrant backgrounds, aged 15–24 in the USA, Australia and Canada, followed by holding focus groups with young people and their parents/caregivers. The focus group design was informed by preliminary analysis of the survey data.

Aims

1. To conduct an in-depth investigation of the experiences of young people from refugee and non-refugee migrant backgrounds and from the diverse contexts of migration to inform the knowledge with the evidence needed to improve their settlement and psychological well-being.
2. To identify the contextual factors that young people and their families regard as relevant for settlement and psychological well-being of young people, and to examine the relationships between successful settlement and well-being.
3. To investigate the nature, scope and effectiveness of support services currently accessed by young people and their families.
4. To provide recommendations for effective research communication and dissemination strategies to impact policy makers and service providers across the mental health and social services sector, as well as positioning future research in the field of settlement.

Participants

Survey

The survey study aimed to target 1,200 young people from refugee and non-refugee migrant backgrounds (aged 15–24) from several regions from which migration occurs:

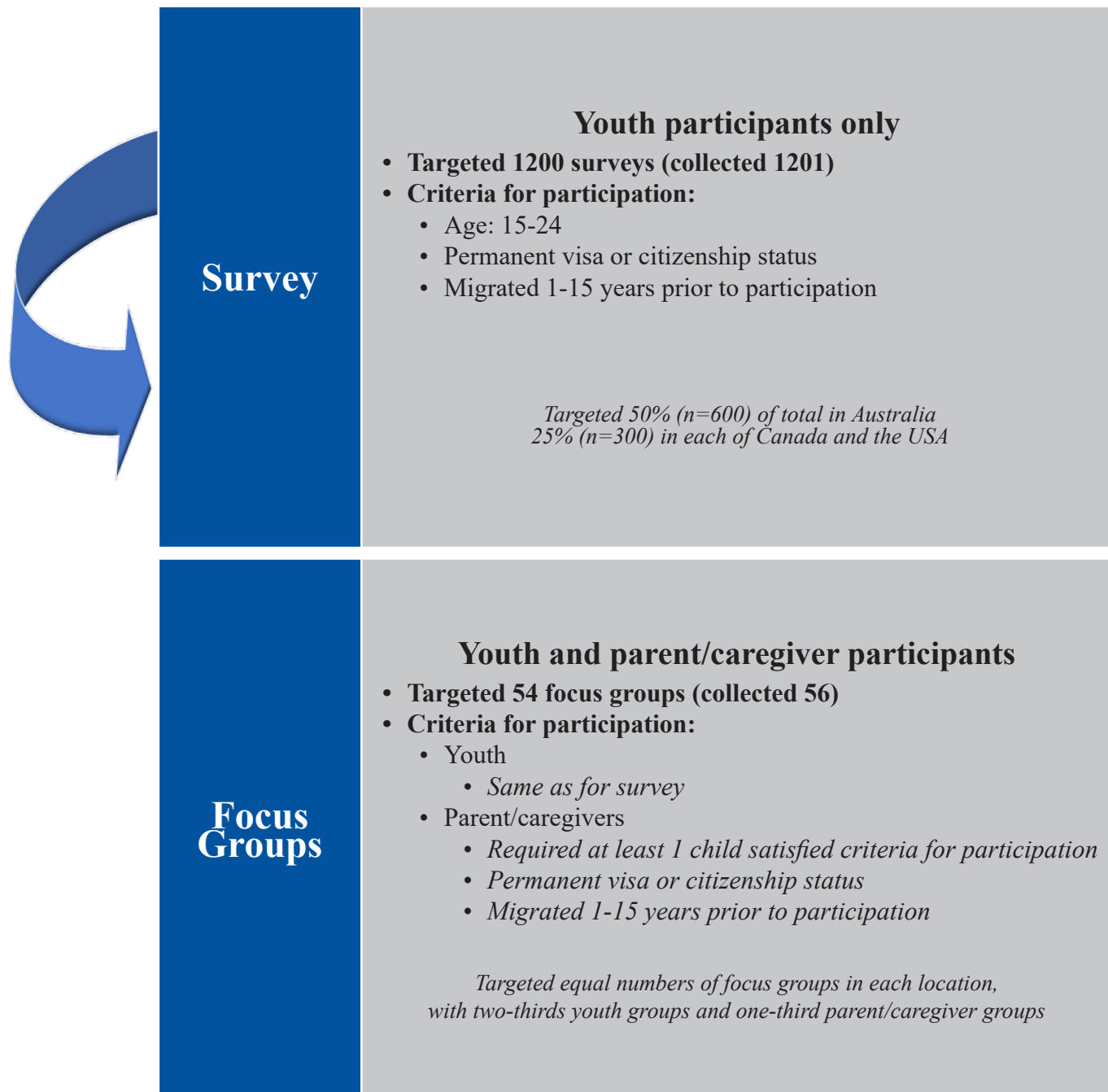
- **Middle East and North Africa** (e.g., Afghanistan, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Syria);
- **East, South and South-East Asia** (e.g., Bhutan, China, India, Myanmar/Burma, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines);
- **Sub-Saharan Africa** (e.g., the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Liberia, Somalia, South Sudan, Zambia); and
- **Central and South America and the Caribbean** (e.g., Brazil, Ecuador, Guatemala, Mexico, Venezuela).

A maximum of two siblings per family could participate. Young people were considered as eligible participants if they had migrated from 1–15 years prior. Prior research indicates that the initial and middle stages of migration and resettlement present unique settlement challenges and strengths compared to the later years [45]. Young people with permanent residency or citizenship of the settlement country were invited to participate; those still awaiting acceptance of asylum claims, or transition from temporary to permanent status, were not included in the study as they were expected to face additional challenges associated with being undocumented or with temporary visa status.

Focus groups

The focus group study targeted young people eligible to participate in the survey, as well as parent or caregivers of young people from this cohort. Parents and caregivers were also expected to have migrated from 1–15 years prior and to have some form of permanent visa or citizenship in the settlement country.

Figure 1: Research design



Procedure

Ethics approval from the University of South Australia (Application ID: 203466) was gained prior to data collection. In addition, ethics procedures in the USA and Canada were followed as per local protocols. All staff and volunteers involved in any phase of the study that involved young people had relevant screening as per local regulations.

Project partner organisations were central to data collection. Each partner organisation had extensive networks of people formed through direct service provision, as well as far-reaching connections within refugee and migrant communities in their locales. In each location, several partner organisation staff and volunteers worked to connect with young people and invite them to participate. These staff and volunteers were known as bilingual workers/researchers. We promoted the study in various ways appropriate to the location and focal communities (e.g., brochure^c, word of mouth, announcements in speeches at local events, etc.). The research team further promoted the study via online or in-person announcements and through holding stalls at local events. Bilingual workers/researchers had a wide range of linguistic and cultural knowledge and skills that they used to engage with young people, explaining what the study was about. They also ensured that young people as well as the parents/caregivers of young people under the age of 18 understood the project so they could give informed consent for both the survey and focus group participation.

The COVID-19 pandemic emerged at the beginning of this project. The research team remained highly flexible during data collection, planning contingencies such as using online tools, practising social distancing when meeting in person and extending timelines.

The bilingual approach was central to the project's success. Bilingual workers/researchers promoted the project within their communities, explaining the project to gain informed consent. They were also present for each administered survey, remaining available to answer any questions participants had about the survey, including explaining words and concepts. The central project staff worked with the bilingual workers/researchers to ensure that sufficient training was offered, as required, and that effective communication and support were always available.

Surveys were administered in paper format (booklet) and online (via SurveyMonkey). The flexibility for participants to use either format was important in such a large project, conducted over three countries and in a range of locations during the time of the COVID-19 pandemic. Regardless of the chosen format, at the time of survey completion, each participant was supported by a bilingual worker/researcher either online via Zoom or in person.

Focus groups were conducted with young people and, separately, with their parents/caregivers. The groups of young people were mostly single gender groups, but the parent/caregiver groups were of mixed gender as were the US groups of young people. Parent/caregiver groups and groups from a regional background were also of mixed gender. Interpreters were made available when relevant. In Australia, focus groups were predominantly conducted face to face, with some online options for young people who expressed this as their preference. Focus groups in Canada and the USA were also conducted either face to face or completely online but, irrespective of participants' choice, a researcher from Australia joined the group online.

A total of 1,201 participants completed a comprehensive survey across the three countries, with around half from Australia and one quarter from each of Canada and the USA, as shown in Figure 2. The survey comprised questions across several domains, including seeking socio-demographic information, as well as questions regarding thoughts, feelings and experiences of life during settlement, family life, seeking help, education and employment. Survey questions included scales^d and individual questions with a mixture of check box options and open-ended answers.

Participants from refugee and non-refugee migrant backgrounds were in approximately equal numbers with 1,189 completing the survey (12 responses were missing on refugee/non-refugee status, with this number unequally divided between the three countries) (Figures 3 and 4).

The target group for this survey was young people aged 15–24 who are considered to be ‘youth’ within most global jurisdictions, for example, the United Nations (UN). In practice, when completing the survey questionnaire, some young people participated with friends, with several participants just outside the intended age range. We report here on the slightly expanded age range of 14–26 (n=1186 for most analyses below), excluding the 15 participants not within this range.

Figure 2: Total surveys conducted all locations

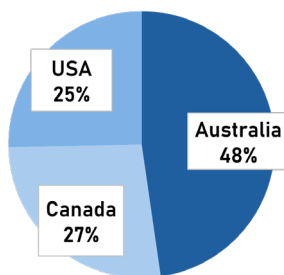


Figure 3: Proportion of participants from refugee and non-refugee migrant backgrounds across all locations

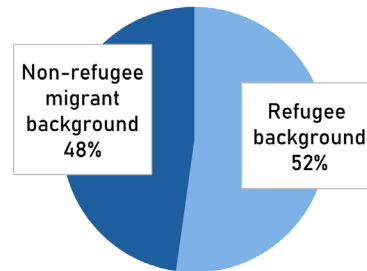
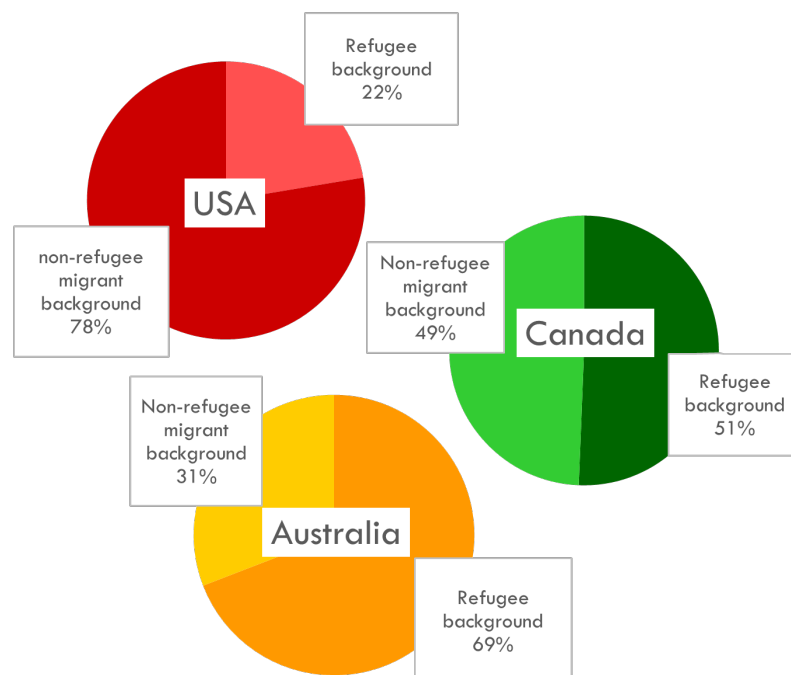
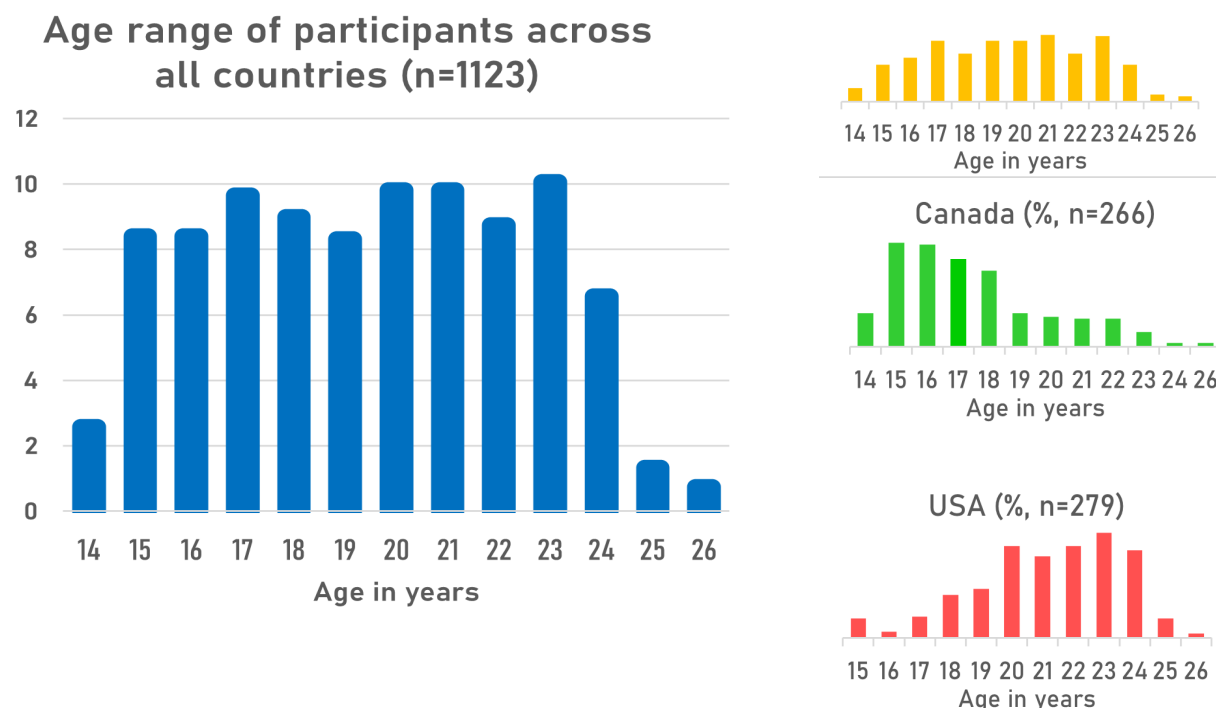


Figure 4: Proportion of participants from refugee and non-refugee migrant backgrounds in each location



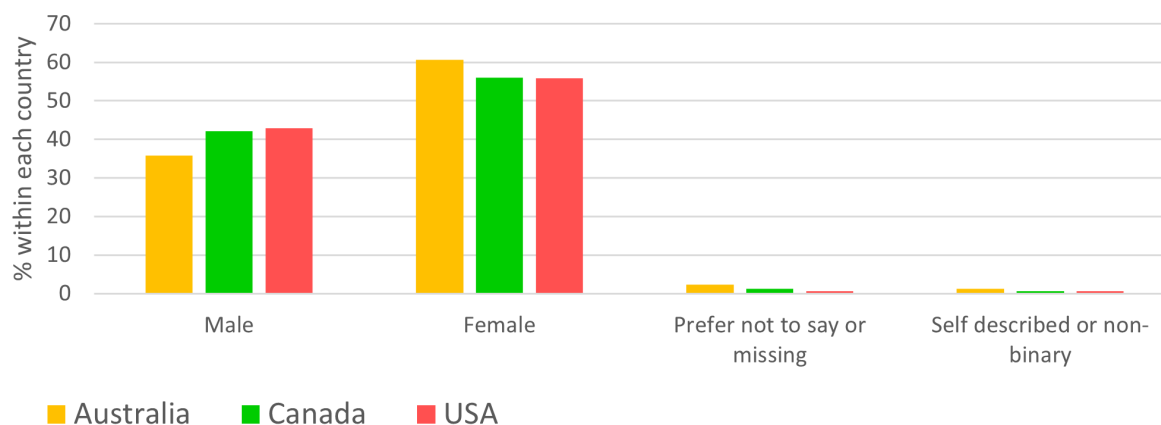
Variations were observed in the proportion of participants of various ages within the overall age group in each of the three countries where the survey was conducted (Figure 5). In Australia, participants were generally evenly spread across the range of ages, with approximately 70% of participants aged 17–23. In the USA, over 70% were aged 20 or older, and in Canada nearly 70% were aged 18 or younger. These variations were due to different migration patterns, data collecting processes and opportunities in each country.

Figure 5: Age of survey participants
n=1123



Participants were asked to self-identify their cultural background, gender and religious beliefs (with the latter optional). Gender options were male, female, non-binary, prefer to self-describe and prefer not to say. Almost 99% of participants reported either male (~40%) or female (~59%); five participants selected non-binary together with a binary gender (male/female); four selected non-binary only; and 20 did not report their gender (Figure 6).

Figure 6: Gender within country



To understand the migration journeys of participants, several questions were asked about their country of birth; their ethnic or cultural identity; the languages in which they were fluent; the language spoken at home; whether or not they had spent time in immigration detention or refugee camps; and the length of time in the settlement country. Using these data, we identified that participants originated from four key regions, as shown in Figure 7. Under ‘other’, the 23 participants had either migrated from countries outside these regions, or did not identify an alternative migration, cultural or ethnic background. The proportion of people from the four main migration regions differed in each country, reflecting local migration trends, as shown in Figure 8.

Figure 7: Regional background of all survey participants

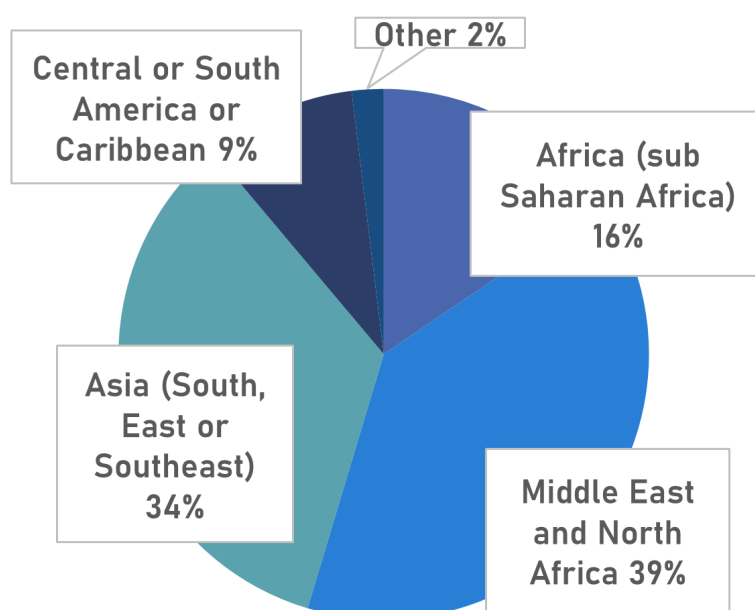
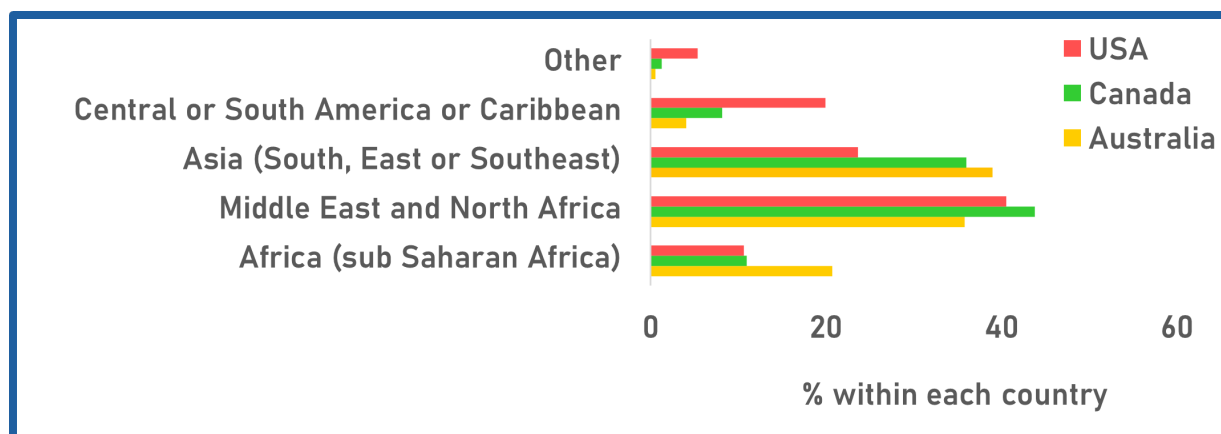


Figure 8: Regional background as a percentage within each country

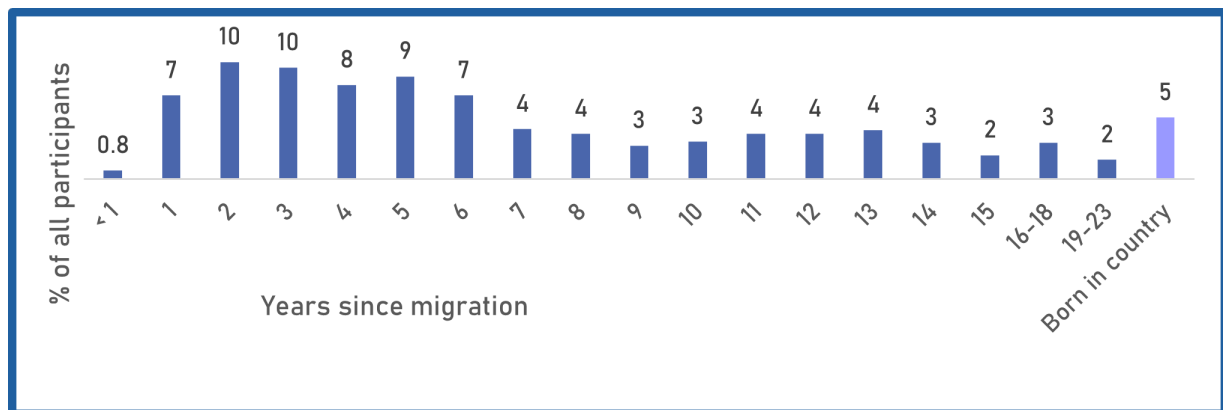


Settling in a new country

Settling in a new country

This study was designed to gain an understanding of the settlement experiences of young people within the first 15 years following migration. As shown in Figure 9, 84% had been settled in the new country for 1–15 years.

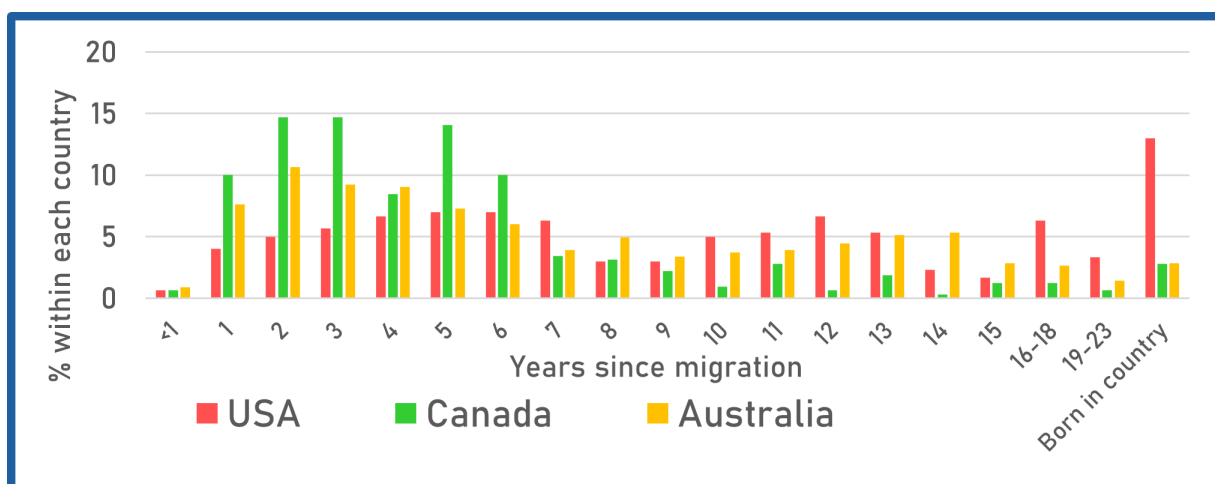
Figure 9: Time duration of settlement (all participants)



Different proportions of young people were reported within each time duration for each settlement country, with more participants in the first five years of settlement being from Canada and Australia (see Figure 10).

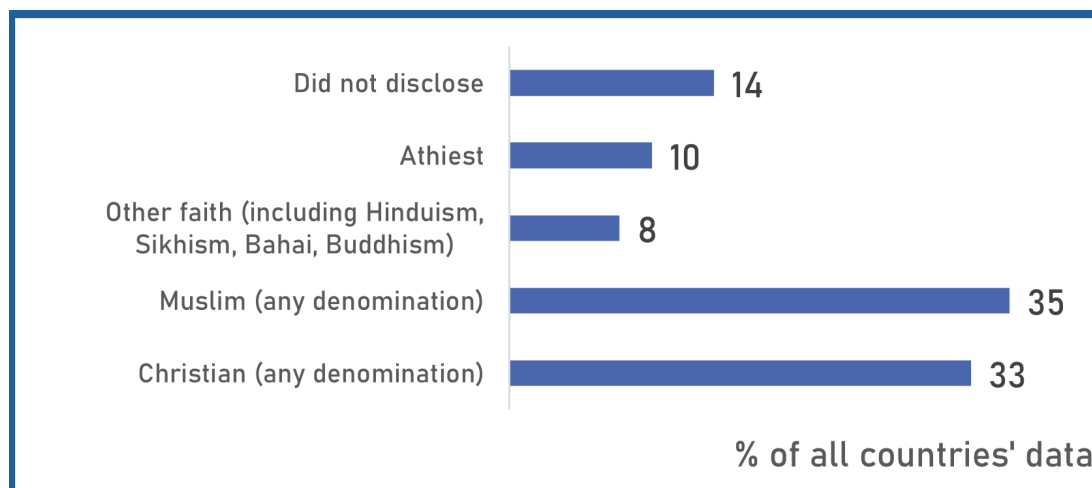
Within the whole data set, of those who identified that they had a ‘refugee’ background, just over 27% had spent time in a refugee camp. Across the three countries, 181 participants had spent time in a refugee camp: notably, only 168 of these identified that they had a refugee background (two participants did not identify refugee/migrant background and 11 identified migrating on a type of non-humanitarian visa). These responses showed how the delineation of refugee or non-refugee migration is not always clear-cut and that people’s migration pathways and visa types do not always reflect voluntary or involuntary migration. This is discussed further, below

Figure 10: Duration of settlement within each country



Participants not only had a wide range of linguistic and regional backgrounds, and a range of time duration since migration or in a refugee camp, but they were also from a range of faith backgrounds. The two largest faith backgrounds were Islam and Christianity, while many participants identified a specific denomination which is not reported here. Around three-quarters of participants reported a religious affiliation, with 10% identifying that they were atheist and 14% preferring not to respond (Figure 11)

Figure 11: Religion and faith (all countries data)

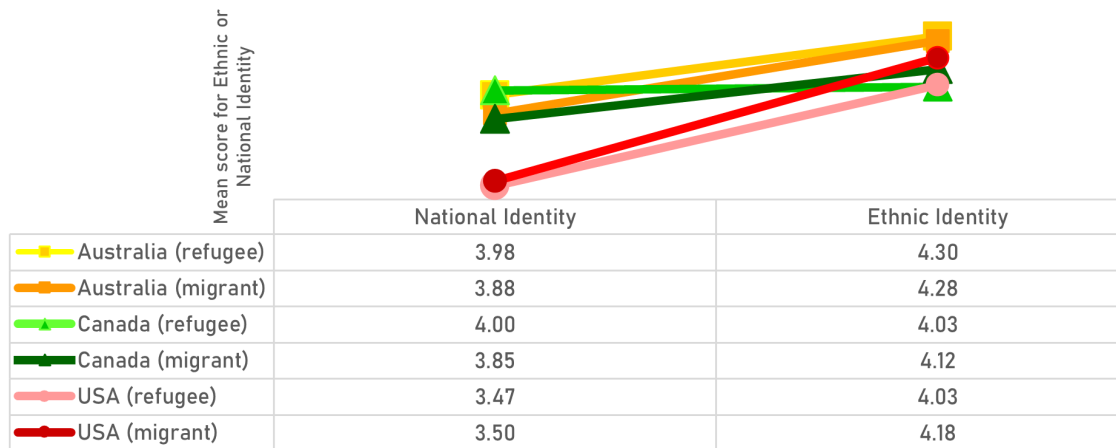


Participants reported that feeling a sense of identity and having a sense of belonging were important, as further discussed in qualitative sections on focus groups below. In the survey, data relating to identity and acculturation showed how connected these feelings and practices were to a sense of well-being. The survey asked participants to rate how much they thought of themselves as being from a refugee or immigrant background; as Australia/Canadian/American; and/or as being from a specific ethnic group. Significant differences were found between those who identified as having refugee or immigrant backgrounds, aligned with the mode of migration (refugee/non-refugee migration), with the strongest effect being felt by young people of a refugee background.^e

When analysing participants' answers to simple questions about how they thought of themselves, no differences were found between young people from refugee and non-refugee migrant backgrounds in terms of how much they identified as being Australian/Canadian/ American.^f However, the survey included more in-depth questions about participants' sense of identity, such as how much they valued elements of their heritage's cultural practices, community and language (ethnic identity) and/or the value they attached to elements of the settlement societies of Australia, Canada and USA more generally (national identity). Through exploring these more complex data, young people's sense of cultural identity could be further understood.

Some similarities and a few significant differences were reported in the extent to which participants felt a sense of ethnic and/or national identity across the three different countries in which data were collected^g (Figure 12). Young people from non-refugee migrant backgrounds across the three countries reported a similar level of ethnic identity which, in all cases, was higher than their level of national identity. Young people from both refugee and non-refugee migrant backgrounds in Canada and Australia had similar levels of national identity that were statistically higher than that in the United States (USA).^h Young people from refugee backgrounds in Australia had a statistically higher level of ethnic identity compared to both Canada and the USA, with no statistical difference between the two north American countries for participants from refugee backgrounds. The sense of ethnic identity for participants from non-refugee migrant backgrounds was not significantly different across all three countries.ⁱ

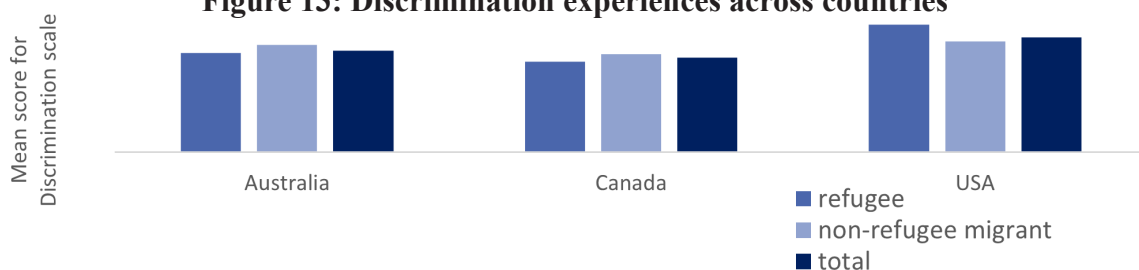
Figure 12: Ethnic and national identity across all three countries



These differences are highlighted to show the different ways that context can affect young people's perceptions and expressions of identity. It should be noted here that the data reflect the views of young people living in quite different social contexts. Having a sense of cultural identity, either with the national society or with one's ethnic group, is impacted by localised context and complex social environments. Regardless of the country of settlement or the mode of migration, both ethnic and national identity were important for young people's integration, sense of self-esteem, life satisfaction and resilience, as well as their overall difficulties in several ways as further discussed below.

The experiences of discrimination were also different between the three countries^j, with Canadian young people reporting the lowest levels, followed by Australia and the USA^k (Figure 13). Within each country, young people with refugee and non-refugee migrant backgrounds had differing experiences of discrimination. In Canada and Australia, discrimination experiences were only marginally different for refugee and non-refugee migrant young people, whereas in the USA, significant differences were found.^l Young people from non-refugee migrant backgrounds reported higher levels of discrimination compared to those from refugee backgrounds in Australia and Canada, but in the USA, the opposite was found. No significant differences were found in experiences of discrimination in relation to participants' gender, age, region of origin or religious beliefs within each country.^m

Figure 13: Discrimination experiences across countries



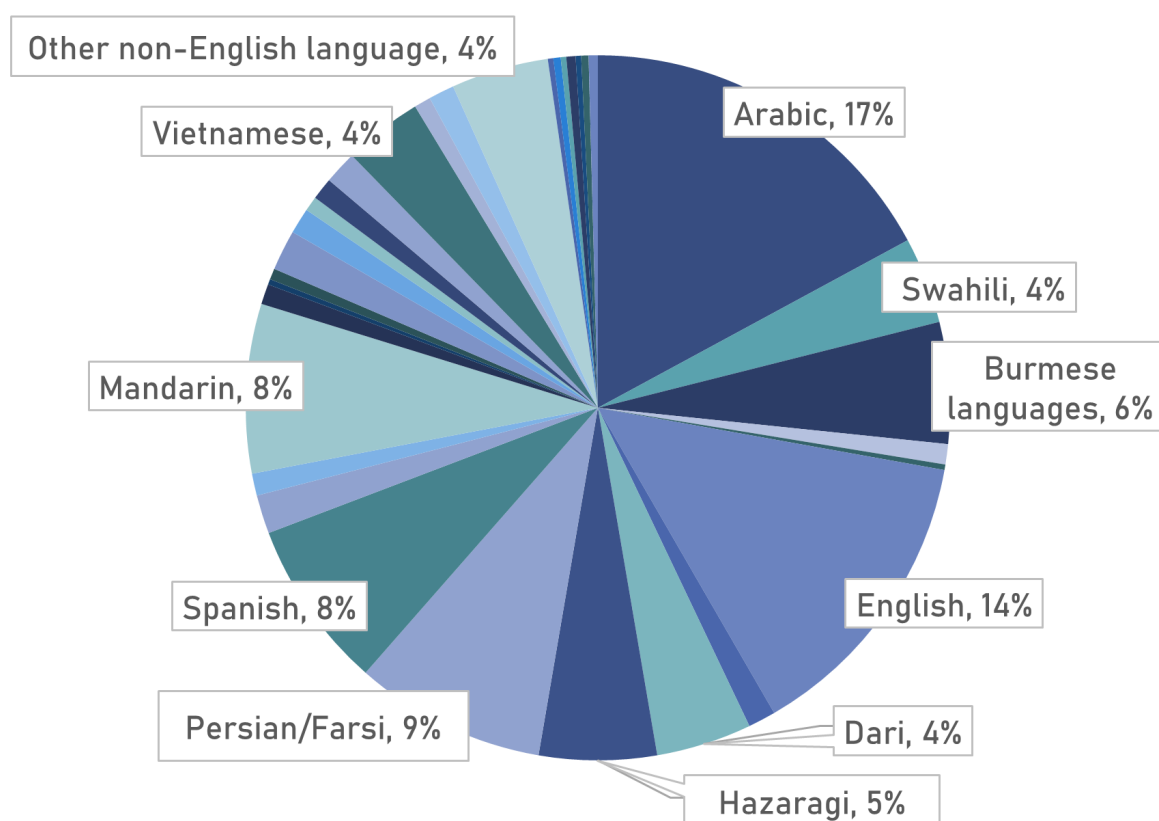
Perceptions of discrimination were impacted by the length of time in settlement, ethnic and national identity, and mode of migration.ⁿ However, results differed across the three country contexts. Overall, a longer time in settlement was linked to higher perceptions of discrimination. A higher sense of ethnic identity acted as a protective factor and was linked to lower perceptions of discrimination. National identity was impactful only in Australia and the USA, where it was associated with lower perceptions of discrimination. In the context of these variables, being from a refugee background was only significant within the USA, with these young people experiencing significantly more discrimination.

Family

Almost all survey participants were living with their family. Most lived with two parents and siblings. A smaller but substantial group lived with only one parent and/or with other caregivers including aunts or uncles, grandparents or older siblings. Some participants were living independently, either alone or with friends, and several had a spouse and children of their own. One person indicated being unhoused at the time of participation. At home, most survey participants (86%) spoke a language other than English.

In Figure 14, some of the many languages spoken in participants' homes are shown. These are the self-identified languages that participants listed in the survey. Languages spoken at home identified by more than three participants are shown in the chart, with the largest groups identified. Three or more participants spoke (at home): Amharic, Armenian, Cantonese, Chaldean, Dinka, French, Hausa, Hindi, Kinyarwanda, Kirundi, Korean, Kurdish, Malayalam, Nepali, Pashto, Persian/Farsi, Russian, Somali, Sinhala, Swahili/Kiswahili, Tagalog/Filipino, Tamil, Tigrinya, Turkish, and Urdu, with an additional 39 languages reported by either one or two participants ('other non-English languages' in Figure 14). This reflects the multilingual capacity of young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds. In addition, Figure 14 only shows the language spoken at home: in a separate open-ended box, participants also listed other languages in which they were fluent.

Figure 14: Language spoken at home

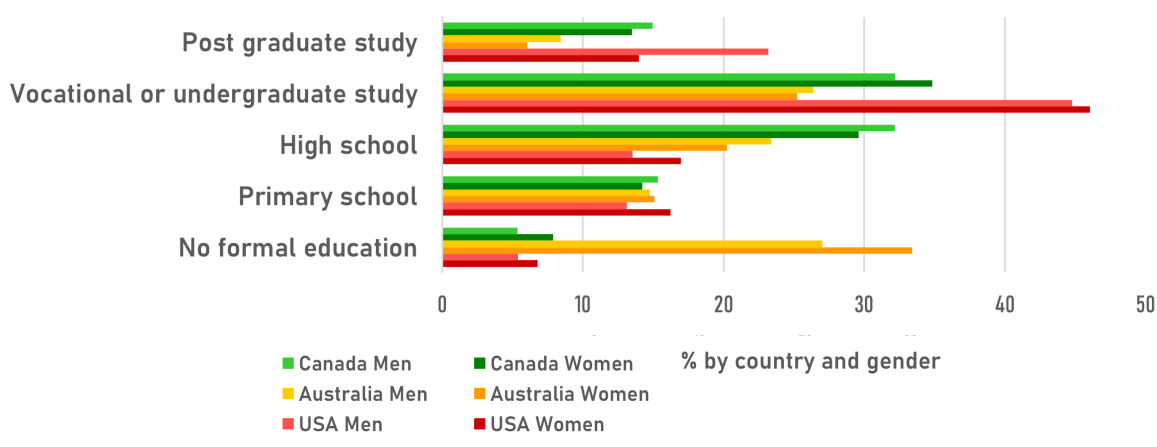


Notably, a substantially higher proportion of people spoke English at home in the USA (27% of all USA participants) compared to Canada (6% of Canadian participants) and Australia (11% of Australian participants). This may reflect specific cohorts of participants within each country. For example, more participants who were in the early years of settlement were in the Canadian group, with more participants in the USA either American-born or having lived in the USA for many years.

The proportion of parents/caregivers in the USA and Canada who had completed college or university degrees was higher overall than among Australian participants' parents/caregivers. These results are likely to be an outcome of the specific sampling procedure in each location, combined with policies for resettlement from specific locations, barriers to and facilitators of migration in each location, and each country's policies around family reunification. In Australia, where a larger proportion of the data was from young people from refugee backgrounds, approximately 27% of parent/caregiver men and 33% of parent/caregiver women had no formal education, whereas in the two north American countries, these proportions were from 5–8% (see Figure 15). Differences between refugee and non-refugee background parent/caregivers in terms of having no formal education were seen across all three countries. Those with refugee backgrounds had higher rates of no formal education; however, the rates of no formal education for Australian parent/caregivers were proportionally higher in all cases.

Figure 15: Parent/caregiver education by country

NOTE: some participants did not provide any details for one or more caregivers. Results shown are using valid responses and are a percentage within each gender and country group.



As detailed earlier, gaining an understanding of refugee experiences and migration is complex. Some participants self-identified coming from a non-refugee migrant background; however, it was noted that they arrived via types of family reunion visa and had originally migrated from countries known to be sources of refugees, such as Afghanistan. Hence the distinction between refugee and non-refugee migration was not a simple binary one. In addition, the likelihood of parent/caregivers having no formal education experiences may be higher for participants from specific country backgrounds, as well as from specific refugee experiences. These experiences are highly diverse and should not be assumed; for instance, some parent/caregivers with experiences as refugees are highly educated and skilled experts across a range of fields.

The impact of family on participants' well-being was substantial. Regardless of the levels of education of parents and caregivers, family support was important for participants' resilience, life satisfaction and self-esteem. A significant positive relationship was found between these well-being variables and family function in all three countries and higher family function was, in all cases, associated with significantly reduced overall difficulties.^o When participants' family function was categorised as either 'healthy' or 'unhealthy' [46], significantly higher well-being across several variables was found for participants with healthy family function.^p Young people with a higher level of family function also showed generally higher outcomes for all measures of life satisfaction, self-esteem and resilience, with lower total difficulties. These results were found for each country's group, as well as for individual participants within each country.

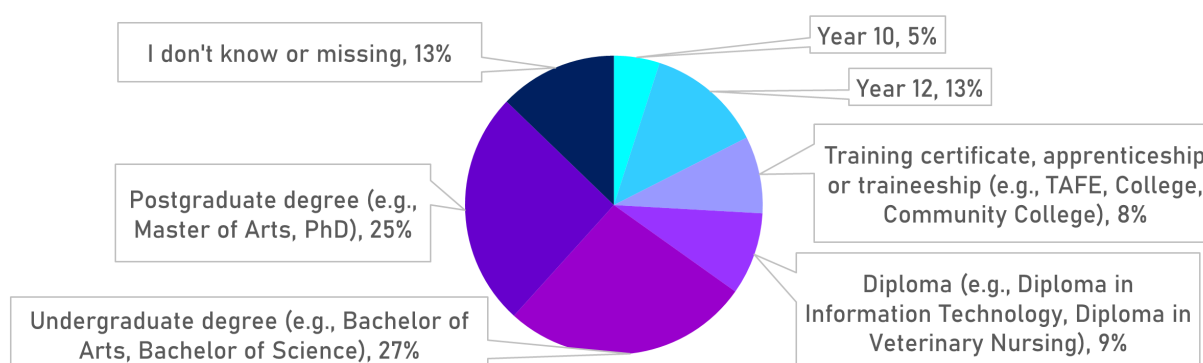
Education and employment

Education was a major part of everyday life for most participants, with 74% currently studying. Most of these students (57%) were attending school; 26% were at university studying for undergraduate degrees; 12% were at college or in other vocational study, such as training certificates or apprenticeships; and approximately 4% were undertaking other types of education.

When asked about their experiences in education, around three-quarters of all participants responded, including all those currently studying, plus some who had recently finished their studies. Of these participants, 55% reported zero instances of bullying experiences. Unfortunately, this meant that the remaining 45% (n=404 participants) had at least one experience of bullying at school (or other educational institution), such as being called names, being hurt or hit, or being left out of activities by other students. The frequency of these experiences of bullying was linked to participants having more difficulties^q and lower expectations of education.^r When asked whether they felt supported and included at school in terms of classes and staff, results were generally favourable and showed that students felt somewhat or very supported at school.^s No significant differences were found in the level of bullying or school support experience across the three countries^t.

Most participating young people had high expectations for their education, with 80% reporting that they expected to complete tertiary or post-secondary vocational study

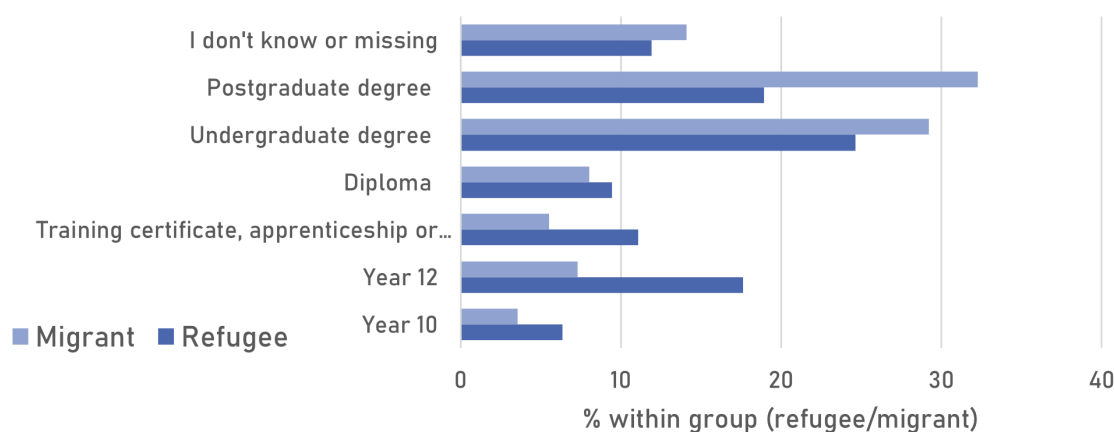
Figure 16: Education expectations across all countries



Although high expectations were expressed by participants from both refugee and non-refugee migrant backgrounds, a notable and significant difference was found with young people from non-refugee migrant backgrounds overall having expectations of pursuing higher levels of education.^u When further investigated, this difference was found to be most striking in Canada and Australia, whereas in the USA, it was not significant.^v Furthermore, the overall expectations for education from all participants in the USA compared to those in Canada and Australia were significantly higher.^w

Further analysis explored the relationship between parent/caregivers' level of education and young people's expectations for education and showed that parent/caregiver men and women with higher levels of education had a positive influence on participating young people's expectations for education.^x

Figure 17: Education expectations for young people across all countries



The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on education experiences was slightly different across the three countries, with different restrictions and experiences in each location.^y Many participants gave detailed qualitative responses when asked what challenges they faced during the pandemic in relation to their education, with many emphasising the negative impact of school closures on their learning as they were required to use online systems for learning and communication.

Although fewer participants were working compared to studying at the time of the survey, they still comprised a substantial minority. As shown in Table 1, most high school students were not working, and about one in seven were working compared to the group ‘not studying’ which showed around a 50% employment rate. Older participants were, unsurprisingly, more likely to be working.^z

Table 1: Employment and education

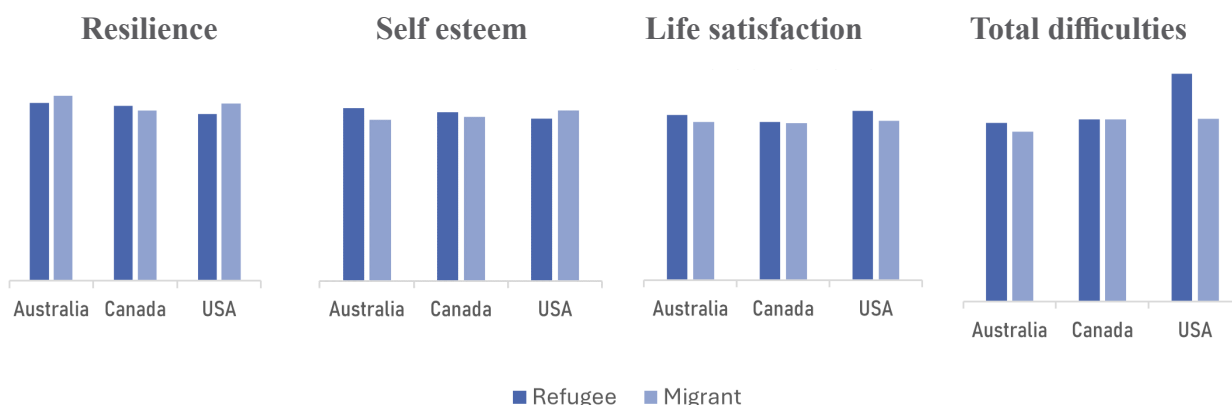
	Yes, currently working	No, not currently working	TOTAL
n (percentage of n=975 surveys with data for these items)			
Not Studying	63 (6% of total)	59 (6%)	122 (13%)
High School	59 (6%)	424 (43%)	483 (50%)
College or Vocational Education	29 (3%)	75 (8%)	104 (11%)
University	90 (9%)	138 (14%)	228 (23%)
Other Education	10 (1%)	28 (3%)	38 (4%)
TOTAL	251 (26%)	724 (74%)	975 (100%)
Note: In all, 211 (18%) missing from education and/or employment ^{aa}			

In terms of negative experiences at work, the survey showed that some participants experienced some harassment and (generally) low to moderate levels of physical, emotional and psychological demands. The type of work (casual, part-time, full-time, etc.) did not affect the levels of harassment experienced, nor the level of job demands.^{bb} Interestingly, experiences of bullying at school correlated with harassment at work^{cc}, with both related to ethnic identity. Having a strong sense of ethnic identity played a protective role: participants who indicated a higher sense of identification with their ethnic group and heritage reported a lower level of harassment at work or of bullying at school^{dd}. The level of family function also played a protective role for both.

Well-being

A major focus of the project was to explore and gain an understanding of the psychological well-being of young people: hence, we included several variables in the survey to contribute to this understanding^{ee}

Figure 18: Relative well-being measures by country



All scales mean value - not standardised

Figure 18 shows the relative levels of participant well-being across the three country cohorts, as measured by different scales in the survey^{ff}. Within each country, the overall total difficulties faced by young people from refugee and non-refugee migrant backgrounds differed only in the USA^{gg}, with a resultant difference found between difficulties faced by young people from refugee backgrounds between the countries.^{hh} Within each country, the overall life satisfaction, self-esteem and resilience of participants from refugee and non-refugee migrant backgrounds were not significantly different. The exception was in Australia where the level of self-esteem of young people from a refugee background was higher than that of those from a non-refugee migrant background, while the level of resilience of young people from a non-refugee migrant background was higher than that of young people from a refugee background; however, these differences were relatively small.ⁱⁱ A difference was found between the countries in the level of resilience of young people from a non-refugee migrant background, with Australia having the highest level.^{jj} However, when examining responses from all participating young people across the three countries without separately considering refugee and migrant backgrounds, no significant differences were found in their levels of resilience, life satisfaction or self-esteem.^{kk}

Perceptions of discrimination had a significant impact on young people, negatively affecting their life satisfaction and self-esteem, as well as affecting their total difficulties.^{ll} As shown in earlier sections, a stronger sense of cultural identity, both ethnic and national, had a positive effect on reducing perceptions of discrimination, although the longer the time spent in settlement, the higher the participants' reports of discrimination. These concepts were further explored in the focus group study.

The survey showed that support from family and at school (or other educational institutions) played an important role in reducing perceptions of discrimination, therefore improving young people's well-being. When new variables, including those related to identity, refugee/non-refugee migration status and length of time in settlement^{mm}, were introduced to a model, the impact of school support was significant in every country.ⁿⁿ This was especially the case in the USA where school support reduced the impact of having a refugee background, length of time in settlement and ethnic identity.^{oo} Similarly, when family function was introduced, it was impactful in all three countries^{pp}.

Higher expectations for education were not significantly linked to resilience, self-esteem or life satisfaction in any of the three countries. However, total difficulties had a clear relationship with education expectations for young people from refugee backgrounds in Australia (more difficulties were associated with lower education expectations) and young people from non-refugee migrant backgrounds in the USA (more difficulties were associated with higher education expectations).⁹⁹ The relationship between expectations for education and experiencing mental health stress was explored further in the focus groups.

Overall, the survey showed that support from family and at school (or other educational institutions) was associated with reduced reports of discrimination experiences, as was having a higher sense of either ethnic or national identity, with this varying slightly between the three countries (as reported above). Perceptions of discrimination, in turn, had an important effect on well-being.¹⁰⁰ Overall, a sense of belonging and the feeling of well-being were improved for young people who received greater support at school and from family, with reduced experiences of exclusion or discrimination.

Asking for help

Service provision and access to supports for well-being were a key focus for this project. The survey included many open-ended questions and a range of check-box-type questions about various help-seeking behaviours, as well as topics for which young people noted they would like to receive help. Participants were asked if they received any help from a range of informal and formal sources, including, for example, from friends, family, community, educational institutions or mental health services. Although supports were accessed by some participants, supports were conspicuously absent for a large proportion of participants. Across the wide range of supports listed, 29% of participants said they had accessed neither formal nor informal supports.

When asked if they had received any help from various sources for emotional or behavioural problems over the previous 12 months, 43% of participants said they received help from relatives (e.g., parents, cousins, aunts, uncles, etc.), while 43% said they sought help from friends. In total, considering family and friends together, 56% of young people sought support from one or both sources. These percentages were the highest of all support sources accessed by participating young people. However, overall, 54% of participants reported receiving no help from formal sources, such as services or through school, while 39% reported receiving no informal supports from friends, family or community connections. These results highlighted the challenges that these young people may experience when seeking and/or receiving help for mental health challenges.

Results were higher when participants were asked if they had spoken to anyone about occupational or career plans, with a total of 78% of participants talking to someone about their plans for education or employment pathways. The most common support source here was also family with 69% of participants saying they spoke with family about this topic (e.g., parents/caregivers, siblings, wives, husbands, cousins, grandparents, uncles, aunts, etc.). In addition to family, 45% of participants spoke to staff at their school or educational institution, such as teachers, guidance counsellors or career counsellors.

Family was a clear source of support for young people for emotional problems as well as for discussions about education or employment pathways, with friends also playing an important role. These results aligned with the previously reported results that showed how important family function was for young people's well-being. The support networks through friends and family that young people reported were critically important, especially when considered against the lower rate of access to formal services for support.

Focus groups

In total, we conducted 56 focus group [FG] interviews with a total of 259 participants comprising young people and parents or caregivers in South Australia; Ontario, Canada; and California, USA. Of these, 38 FGs were conducted with 163 young people in: Australia (FG=17, n=72); Canada (FG=12, n=55); and the USA (FG=9, n=36). We also conducted 18 FG interviews with parents or caregivers of young people (aged predominantly 15–24 years). Parent/caregiver groups comprised 8 FGs (n=45) in South Australia; 6 FGs (n=27) in Ontario, Canada; and 4 FGs (n=24) in California, USA.

We report here the salient findings from the FGs with young people, followed by an overview of the parent/caregiver groups. The following transcription notations were used in the reporting of FG findings.

Transcription notations	
Symbol	Use
P	Participant
I	Interviewer
...	Speech/text omitted by researchers
[text]	Text inserted by researchers
[A/C/U-FG(number)]	Code of participant's Focus Group

A summary of FG demographic information is included at the beginning of the sections on young people and parent/caregivers, followed by an analysis of the predominant topics: A. Acculturation and belonging; B. Family relationships and C. Stress, coping and help seeking.

Focus groups with young people

Of the total sample of young people, 56% were female and 42% were male. Most participants were aged 18–24 years (53%) or 15–17 years (35%). Participants were from either a non-refugee migrant background (56%) or had experiences of being a refugee (40%), with the migration status of a few participants missing or uncertain. Most young people had resided in the settlement country from 1–5 years (55%) or 6–10 years (24%). The vast majority of young people were engaged in some form of study (90%); only about one-third of the sample were in paid employment.

The following differences were found in the composition of FGs in the three research locations: most young Australian participants were from a refugee background while most young US participants had a non-refugee migrant background. The Canadian sample included similar proportions of young people from refugee and non-refugee migrant backgrounds. All Canadian and most Australian FGs (except two) were conducted separately with girls/young women and boys/young men, whereas in the USA, the groups were mixed in terms of gender. Most Canadian participants were attending high school or the first year at university (aged 15–17 years), whereas Australian and US participants were older.

Table 2: Demographic details of young participants in focus groups

38 Focus groups (N = 163) ^{ss}		
Gender	Female	56.4%
	Male	42.3%
	Prefer not to disclose	1.2%
Country of Settlement	Australia	44.2%
	Canada	33.7%
	USA	22.1%
Migration Status	Refugee	39.9%
	Migrant	55.8%
	Other/unsure	4.3%
Age	< 15 years	1.2%
	15-17 years	35.0%
	18-24 years	53.4%
	>24 years	2.5%
Time in Settlement	< 1 year	0.6%
	1-5 years	54.6%
	6-10 years	23.9%
	11-15 years	11.7%
	>15 years	5.5%
	Born in settlement country	1.8%
Education Status	Studying	89.6%
	Not studying	6.7%
Employment Status	Employed	33.1%
	Not employed	65%

Participating young people were from a range of regional backgrounds, as shown in Figure 19. Figure 20 shows the wide range of countries from which participants came, including those listed as ‘missing’ which included young people identifying their cultural or ethnic background as part of a broader group, for example, from an African, Arab, Muslim, etc., background.

Figure 19: Regional background of young people participating in focus groups

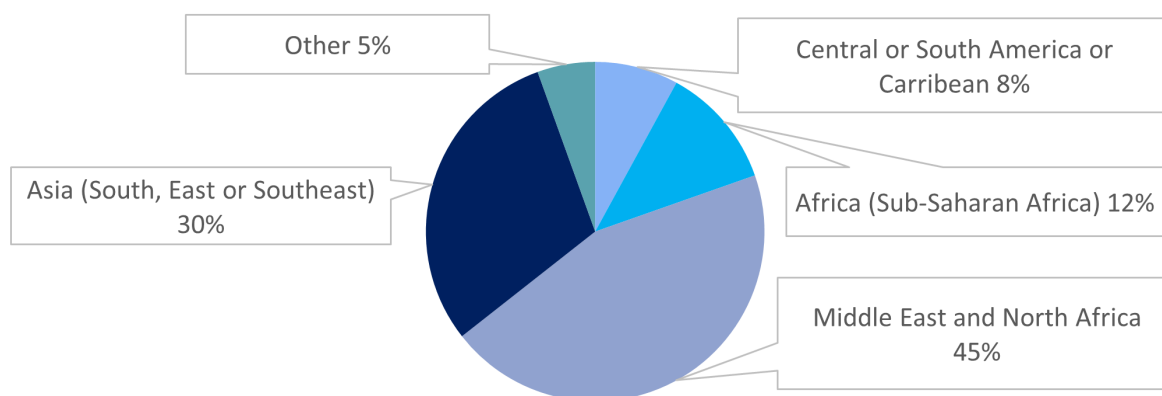
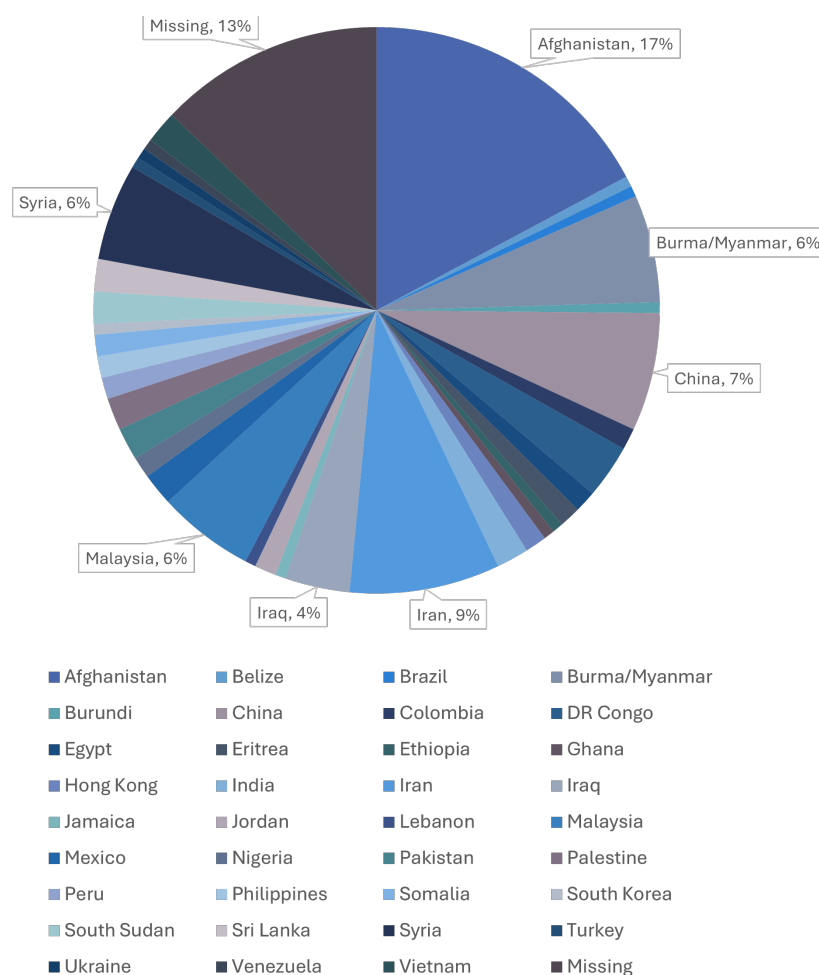


Figure 20: Country background of young people participating in focus groups

Note: DR Congo=Democratic Republic of the Congo



Acculturation & Belonging

AUSTRALIA

Most young FG participants in Australia expressed their gratitude for the safety, security and freedom they experienced after migration. They recalled the numerous hardships they had experienced pre-migration, including war and conflict, and favourably compared their present situation to what they had faced before. Participants migrating from countries where rights and freedoms were severely curtailed, especially for women, expressed their gratitude for the independence they enjoyed in Australia

It is mostly about freedom because women can't get a job in [native country]. They can't go to school, university. They can't go outside their house without a male so it's totally different from here. You can do whatever you want here; it's up to you; it's your choice. So it's really different; it's great here. [A-FG21]

Participants felt a shared sense of belonging due to the opportunities they received after migration. They were especially grateful for the opportunity to pursue their education, attend school and university, and for government assistance to do so. The opportunities and freedoms they enjoyed in Australia gave them a sense of being human that they had not previously experienced.

Some participants expressed a sense of being Australian as they had grown up or lived most of their life in Australia. Others said that even when they returned to their home country, they did not feel that it was where they belonged. For many participants, the multicultural nature of Australian society and its diversity of cultures helped them to experience a sense of belonging. They felt they belonged as many migrants and refugees in Australia were like them: Australia also provided them with opportunities to meet and learn about people from other countries.

I feel I belong in Australia because Australia is so diverse; there are so many different cultures and ethnicities; you don't feel like alone or left out ... Because [native country] is not a very multicultural place. [So] when I first came here ... I was a bit shocked because it was really multicultural here and you see all different kinds of people ... it was a really new experience [for me] and I didn't really mind it. [A-FG23m]

Some participants indicated that, while they felt they belonged in Australia, they also felt they belonged to their cultural group when taking part in cultural festivals and events (e.g., Lunar New Year). Others said that learning English as well as participating in community events and local institutions were important aspects of a sense of belonging and becoming part of the Australian community. Participants also described how they were utilising the multiculturalism in Australia, as well as the freedom of expression, to arrive at their unique blend of Australian and native cultures. As one young participant from a non-refugee migrant background stated:

... because I was born in China ... I do think that ... my culture is ... a combination of Chinese and Australian, yeah. [A-FG23m]

Belonging was contextual for some participants. When they were with people who accepted them, they felt they belonged, but if they did not feel accepted or felt they could not express or be themselves, then they did not feel a sense of belonging. In this context, some even said they did not feel they completely belonged in their own ethnic communities due to the differences in values and morals. As one young participant shared:

... one of the biggest issues within our own ... communities [is] that people [are] also fighting to ... belong. And especially us young people who have been exposed to different cultures, different things that we have now added onto our own culture. So when you introduce new things in your beliefs ... they also see you as if you don't belong with them. So you're also fighting the community. [A-FG14]

According to some participants, although they felt a sense of belonging in Australia, when they encountered instances of racism and discrimination, that sense of belonging was taken away from them. One participant doubted whether they would “emotionally [ever] belong in Australia” [A-FG15], while another said that as they had already experienced life back in their native country, “coming [here] feels like sleeping over at a friend's house” [A-FG4].

Being excluded, unfair treatment, racism and discrimination

Young people described numerous experiences of being excluded, unfair treatment, racism and discrimination. Several participants recalled instances of feeling excluded when they started schooling during the early stages of migration. They described the difficulties of making friends and having to sit alone during lunchtime/recess. This caused them sadness and anxiety during their later years in school. One young participant described an incident in primary school that brought about strong emotional reactions long after it had happened:

... they were playing ... a typical family role ... game ... he's the dad, she's the mum ... you guys are the kids [etc.] ... And I asked, “can I play?” And they said, “no, because ... they don't look like you, so ... it wouldn't make sense that you'd be related to them” ... that memory always carried with me ... I couldn't ... play with them because I wasn't [like them] even in imagination ... [A-FG16]

Many instances of exclusion were attributed to participants' inability to communicate effectively in English, or because others could not pronounce their names. Sometimes participants were bullied or felt excluded owing to the contents of their lunchboxes, as one participant reported:

... my mum would pack my lunch ... and sometimes there'd be ... stuff ... that a lot of the Australian ... kids wouldn't have seen before or wouldn't have tasted ... and they're like “eww, what is that?” and then you also feel ... an outcast ... because ... you don't have the same food as everyone else ... [A-FG24m]

Participants provided many stories of their experiences of different treatment, discrimination and racism. Sometimes racist behaviours were directed towards a particular group of people who could be differentiated through visible markers, such as young Muslim women wearing scarves or young people of African or Chinese heritage.

Some stories were about experiencing different treatment at the workplace, at school or on public transport. For example, when one young person of African heritage had a “bad mental health day”, they were yelled at to “go back to work” while they observed another worker with a different skin tone being shown much more empathy and compassion. In another instance identified as racism at school (another student using the “N word”), the young participant’s complaint was dismissed by a teacher as “he didn’t mean it like that”. Another participant reported feeling ridiculed and dismissed by the authorities after complaining about an incident of racism on public transport. When describing the following, this participant became emotionally overwhelmed:

Two months ago, when I was on the bus, some Aussie girls ... dropped [drink] on my scarf ... they were sitting behind me on the bus ... I talked to the bus driver and he report[ed] to the police. ... [the policeman] eventually talked with those three girls. Then he came back to me [and] said, “it’s okay they are young”. But... it’s not accept[able] for me. [A-FG2]

Most stories from the focus groups contained rich descriptions indicative of the strong impact of these experiences on participants, including the effect on their sense of belonging to their new society.

However, participants were also learning to deal with exclusion, discrimination and racism by: (1) normalising that “[d]iscrimination is just ... part of the world” [A-FG6] and acceptance that it was okay to be different; (2) learning English and being determined to improve their language proficiency; and (3) not taking personally jokes and slurs based on stereotypical beliefs. Sometimes participants were also actively challenging others who tried to exclude them or discriminate against them, as one participant shared:

[Now] if somebody makes me angry or makes me feel different, I shut them [up] with a positive vibe ... with positive words, because there are some people that just don’t love their selves and ... at least I love myself [and] how I am ... [A-FG8]

Participants were also learning to deal with exclusion, discrimination and racism by:

1. Normalising that “[d]iscrimination is just ... part of the world” and acceptance that it was okay to be different;
2. Learning English and being determined to improve their language proficiency; and
3. Not taking personally jokes and slurs based on stereotypical beliefs. Sometimes young people were also actively challenging others who tried to exclude them or discriminate against them.

CANADA

Participants in Canada said they felt a sense of belonging to Canadian society and considered Canada their home as it was somewhere they could work, study and make a living. As one participant said:

*... we are students here;
they're speaking to me like I'm [the] future of Canada. [C-FG10]*

Most participants described the opportunities afforded to them, such as attending school and pursuing an education, after migrating to Canada, opportunities that they did not have before migration. Female participants were especially appreciative of these opportunities to receive an education as some had been deprived of, or prevented from continuing with, their education.

Many participants mentioned the kindness of Canadian people. For one participant, “Canadian means kind; showing kindness to the other people ...” [C-FG12]. To these young people, Canadians were kind and accepting, providing new arrivals with opportunities for education and work, notwithstanding their backgrounds or from where they had migrated. Being accepted as a Canadian by those who had lived longer in Canada also afforded them a sense of belonging.

For others, the multiculturalism in Canada—being able to continue to celebrate religious and cultural festivals and rituals without repercussions and having the ability to spend time with people from diverse backgrounds and cultures—made them feel a “little more Canadian” [C-FG17]. Seeing people from different cultural backgrounds reminded them they were not alone in their struggles as new migrants as, after all, many others from different parts of the world were having similar experiences. Some participants appreciated the inclusivity of schools and within Canadian society and considered it a privilege to be in a dynamic culture. Participants echoed feelings of being included in the community and their sense of belonging, such as the following statement:

... for me it means a lot, especially because I was born in my country and my father was born in another country and my mum from another country. So for me, I am so ... proud to be Canadian ... I feel like everyone respects me ... the government, the people ... [they may be] different than my religion, my nationality, my language, [but] nothing matters. All that matters is that I'm a human. [C-FG18]

Being excluded, unfair treatment, racism and discrimination

Participants reported experiencing hostile in-your-face racism and discrimination, as well as different treatment that was “camouflaged” so they were left wondering whether they had even experienced it. Most participants reported being excluded or treated unfairly because they had trouble understanding and communicating in a new language, especially during the initial stages after migration. These experiences led to feelings of isolation and loneliness that impeded their sense of belonging. Some participants described being bullied due to their lack of language proficiency. However, these negative experiences also motivated them to improve their language skills and to acquire a Canadian accent so they could be more accepted.

Microaggression or outright racist behaviour were directed towards those who could be differentiated through visible markers, such as Muslim women with scarves/hijabs and young people of Chinese heritage or African background.

One young participant with a Muslim background shared the following:

I [was] treated not nice [by] the man ... in the street and he asked me why I'm wearing [a] hijab and [that] I have to take it off ... [he said] we are in Canada, so I have to [go] back home to my country [to] wear a hijab. [C-FG15]

One young participant of Chinese background said:

When I was in high school ... I don't know English ... so everybody called me Chinaman, Ching China, and I don't like it ... my family had to go to school and talk to the teacher ... next day I go back to school and still got bullied ... I end up fighting and got kicked out of school ... [C-FG16]

One young participant of African background reported being racially vilified at school (by other students using the “N word”) which sometimes made him sad. However, this participant coped with the emotional hurt by ignoring the racial slurs, through self-talk and focusing on the future, as he shared:

... if you care about people's opinion that can get you down ... Nah, I just ignore it ... but really you make me stronger so ... just keep [looking] forwards and focus on where I'm going. Yeah. [C-FG10]

Despite these experiences, participants indicated enormous resilience and numerous coping strategies to manage exclusion, unfair treatment and racism hurled at them. The many strategies in their coping tool kit included:

1. ignoring racial slurs and not giving too much thought to them;
2. being motivated to become fluent in English and to better adapt to a new society; and
3. accepting and being grateful for the opportunities received:

I just accepted it at this point because I know ... I can't go back home ... I know I have to live my life here so I just accepted it and I'm very grateful for the opportunity [C-FG15]

USA

To most participants to be American was to have limitless opportunities, freedoms and rights. They emphasised freedom of speech, opportunities for an education and for employment, gender equality, as well as a feeling of safety and stability in the United States (USA). One young participant compared their current experience to their pre-migration experiences as follows:

... after I arrived in the US, there [was] a very huge culture shock ... yeah, freedom as in you have the right to do everything you want to do ... you can send any opinion or critique ... but in [native country], it is impossible ... and you will be arrested if you do this. [U-FG2]

Growing up in the USA or immigrating at a young age facilitated some participants' sense of belonging. Another participant emphasised that to be American was to respect the American culture as one cannot shame and speak ill of America after choosing to immigrate to the United States (USA).

... for me what it means to be American is ... having respect for the American culture, because I know a lot of immigrants, they tend to hate the way America is run [and] they constantly shame Americans for the way they are, but they also immigrated to ... America. So I feel like having respect and ... accepting the culture itself is just a way of being American. [U-FG13]

Participants also felt a sense of belonging owing to the diversity of cultures in the USA and the multicultural society around them. Participants described at length their appreciation of the cultural diversity in which they lived. They celebrated their cultural festivals, their cultural history and their people, events and foods, while also taking part in others' traditions. To them, freedom included the ability to practise their cultural traditions in the United States (USA). Other participants saw opportunities to blend their culture with the new culture. Some participants acknowledged that they belonged to both the USA and their native country's culture and that they embraced both cultures and societies. As one young person explained:

In my community, it's nice to find some people who share [my] cultural background but, at the end of the day, I don't feel totally connected to the American ... [nor] my original home country community. It's kind of feeling like half in-between them ... it feels like both. [U-FG3]

Other reasons offered for feeling a sense of belonging included: being respected outside the USA, being accepted within the American community, and being welcomed and feeling comfortable in a multicultural community. Although most participants identified with being American for the freedom, opportunity and diversity, some had trouble doing so. This was indicated in the following dialogue between a participant (P) and an interviewer (I):

*P: ... there is a picture that popped into my head when I think American.
I: can you describe the picture?
P: I would say white for sure ... when I think of American, I don't think of myself ... though I do live here and I've lived here for so long. I feel like my culture is a lot ... different than what I think a typical American culture is. [U-FG6]*

Being excluded, unfair treatment, racism and discrimination

Participants provided a few accounts of experiencing outright racism and discrimination. One young participant explained that, as they lived in California, one of the most multicultural states in the US, “people were quick to speak up [against racism]” [U-FG2]. This could be one reason why most accounts were of what they described as microaggression, of feeling excluded or of unfair treatment.

Some participants described their experiences of being excluded immediately after immigration owing to their inability to understand and communicate in English. Language problems also caused issues with making friends, getting along with colleagues and progressing in their work. The challenges of starting in a new school with their own limited language capacity when all the other students had already made their friends were echoed by many and explained by one young participant as follows:

... it was hard to make friends because they see you like someone from [elsewhere] ... if you don't really know the language. [U-FG3]

Others described some instances of being bullied at school for “not [being] American” [U-FG3] and, at least initially, the disadvantages of not understanding local jokes and not being familiar with local sports and music. They also described how they paid special attention to these aspects in their attempt to acculturate and adapt to the new society. One young participant's somewhat humorous account of the different treatment they received at school and their response are described in the following story:

... growing up [and] till this day, we cook rice and curry every day [and] the smell was always on me ... so in school I would always be made fun of because I smelled bad; I smelled like curry; so that was kind of a little traumatising because ... my best friend [told] me after four years ... you should spray some perfume or something ... and ever since ... I sprayed [Mum's perfume] all the time to the point where my PE [physical education] teacher had to give a talk to the class like just spray a little bit of perfume, you don't need a whole lot ... So that's still stuck with me. [U-FG12]

Participants in the US, similar to those in Australia and Canada, were also coping with exclusion and unfair treatment by striving to learn English and to speak with an American accent. They also used strategies such as normalising and minimising negative incidents, that is, incidents that were “never anything too deep, just little remarks ...” [U-FG9].



Family relationships

AUSTRALIA

Family support. Participants in Australia shared the importance of migrating with family. They described how facing immigration challenges together as a family or “walk[ing] the same path” [A-FG1] with their shared understandings and feelings enormously enhanced their settlement experiences. While acknowledging the support given by parents, the bonding between family members was most important, as one participant shared:

You trust each other. If you have a problem you go to them, you ask their opinion ... because they're older than you, they probably know more ... than you ... And ... family, they don't have to do anything for you, that bond ... between you and them makes you happy. You don't need anything else, I guess. [A-FG21]

Participants expressed appreciation for the material resources and financial support given by parents and for all their parents' efforts to make their settlement journey so much easier. Two siblings (P2 and P3) participating in the same focus group shared the gratitude they felt for their single mother who was supporting their large family:

P3: She is my mum; she's so supportive ... she is cooking ... When we are at school; she is doing the shopping. This is so important while we are going to school.
P2: The important thing she is a single mother ...
P3: [And] we are a really big family—six sisters and two brothers. [A-FG9]

Parents were also supporting young people emotionally including offering them space to express their emotions (“cry to parents after a bad day” [A-FG1]) and listening when they talked to parents about problems and challenges. They shared how parents helped them by offering advice and opinions, mentoring young people, and giving inspiration and motivation. How one participant was emotionally supported was richly described as follows:

I can remember the first days I moved to Australia, I didn't ... speak English. And when I went to school ... people were bullying me, making fun of me. When I ... come back home, my mum ... she excitedly asked me, “how was your day?” And she was smiling at me, [so] I couldn't tell her that I was getting bullied. I just smiled, and said, “it was fine, yeah”. I feel like family ... give[s] lots of strengths. One of their smiles can make you excited to change your [perspective]. [A-FG16]

Several participants described their gratitude for the sacrifices made by their parents to migrate, thereby affording them opportunities for a better life and a brighter future. Participants acknowledged that, while they faced challenges going to school and making friends, their parents also faced different kinds of difficulties, such as finding suitable employment. They were empathetic towards their parents and the struggles they faced to improve their children's lives.

They described how family members supported each other and were lending an ear to each other's difficulties. While expressing their gratitude, other participants described how they would like to reciprocate this support to their parents. They had observed their parents and were motivated and inspired by the hardships they had faced and the perseverance they showed during settlement. As one participant from a non-refugee migrant background shared:

... I know what my parents have been through just to get us here ... just so we could have a good life and I think like it's my turn to ... repay them. And even [after] we moved here ... they still work hard, and it kind of sucks to see that they have to work so much every day ... So yeah ... every time I see that, it's like a reminder that I need to work hard as well, yeah, so I can help them enjoy their life. [A-FG23m]

Participants in Australia were also immensely appreciative of the numerous kinds of support offered by extended family and community members who had immigrated before them. For example, they shared how aunts, uncles and cousins sponsored them to immigrate, helped them to get jobs, helped with school enrolments and assisted parents who were not proficient in English. Many rich stories were told of how extended family members eased the burden of settlement. Other participants, while describing leaving a rich tapestry of family and friends behind, still managed to avoid loneliness owing to friendships created after settlement.

Acculturation gap. The cultural gap between the generations was a prominent theme in young people's narratives. Many young people described how parents persevered to maintain cultural traditions from their home country throughout settlement. However, participants were becoming more accustomed to local ways of doing things as they had grown up in Australia and found some cultural rules and traditions unacceptable (e.g., physical punishment and harsh language by parents to young people).

Participants also described, at length, the disagreements with their parents regarding topics such as relationships, sex, dress code and lifestyle, and the rights and autonomy of women/girls. Miscommunication and misunderstandings between the generations may be due to young people being more fluent in English while their parents continued to speak in their native language. As one young participant aptly shared:

I always joke; they are a generation behind Australia ... it's taking them a lot of time to get used to [the fact that] I grew up here. I'm more acquainted with, and ... follow ... the social norms here, than in our home country ... it doesn't mean that they've raised me wrong. It's just that this is how I grew up, and this is what I ... see from around me. [A-FG16]

Another problem identified by participants was their parents' lack of respect for their personal space as that concept was alien to their respective cultures. Growing up in Australia, however, young people increasingly needed their own personal space and objected to the invasion of their privacy by parents and younger siblings. This led to misunderstandings and conflict. As one young participant explained:

... [in] our culture, we're very family centred ... we don't really stay in our room ... it's more ... family time and doing family stuff. But ... once I reached a certain age [16, 17] ... I just wanted to isolate myself ... [and be in] my room ... So they got upset over that ... they didn't understand ... that sometimes I want to be by myself, yeah. [A-FG13]

A few participants discussed having more serious disagreements with parents which necessitated that they seek external professional help or leave the family home. These conflicts included career choice, women playing sport and the breaking of other cultural taboos. In these instances, participants were trying to compromise but also standing up to parents, as stated by one participant:

I told them, I'm going to be who I am. I will still represent as an Afghan woman and a Muslim and will still represent as an Australian woman as well. I will never leave my religion because this is what makes me who I am ... [A-FG8]

Family responsibilities. Participants appreciated the sacrifices made by their parents and described feeling enormous pressure to reciprocate this support and show appreciation by taking advantage of every opportunity that came their way. They felt a need to be on their "A-game" and to keep "getting A-pluses" all the time, so they did not cause their parents to feel disappointed. Hence, they were taking precautions not to disappoint, upset or cause worry to their parents.

Other participants described the enormous responsibilities placed on their shoulders especially when they were the eldest child in the family. They described supporting parents who did not speak English in paying bills, translating, enrolling siblings at school and taking out car registration. One participant said "... literally everything that parents do, I [take] the responsibility [for]" [A-FG1]. Additional pressures were exerted on older siblings to take care of younger siblings, helping with their homework and assignments, and acting as a role model. Some took on the role of family breadwinner when parents were sick or unemployed. These additional household responsibilities were sometimes frustrating and emotionally overwhelming when participants were also trying to focus on their study and work, as one participant shared:

I go home, I go to work, come home at 12:00 a.m. and then I study and then it repeats Monday to Friday. I'm training, I'm working and then I get a scholarship to America and [with] all that, I can't leave, I've got to look after family. So it's sacrifice-sacrifice-sacrifice and that's what I've learnt from the beginning. [A-FG15]

Unrealistically high expectations were placed on participants to succeed; to get good grades at school, a good job and a good salary; as well as finding a partner and getting married. Some participants were feeling confused regarding the conflicting expectations of their parents: to succeed academically, become employed and get married, while simultaneously taking care of household chores, bills and the welfare of younger siblings in large families.

Participants also complained about having to live up to community norms and expectations and being constantly compared to others in the community. Participants spoke strongly against discrimination within cultural communities, about their dislike of community gossip, as well as the higher scrutiny and judgement of young female participants by community members. As discussed in one focus group:

P2: I come from a community where a woman moving out [of home], it's seen as – wow ...

P3: Wow, you're something ... bad ...

P2: Yeah, something's wrong with the family ...

P3: Yeah, or they'll even think that you're a [censored] ... or something ...

ALL: [in] a relationship ...

P2: [they] always associate everything with prostitution. [A-FG14]

Missing family/community. Several participants had migrated without their parents or were separated from their adult siblings who continued to live in unsafe situations, in countries experiencing war and conflict, or as undocumented migrants in neighbouring countries. Others were worried about the health of their parents or of their siblings living with them. Sometimes they became emotionally overwhelmed when discussing family relationships which then necessitated navigating focus group discussions to other topics.

CANADA

Family support. For most participants living in Canada, family support was vital for successful settlement. Many acknowledged the difficulties of moving to another country and the challenges at the beginning, with new systems, people and language. Their family helped them to navigate through these difficulties in various ways and to cope with loneliness during the initial stage of immigration. As one young participant said, "... my parents, they always support me in anything that I want" [C-FG14].

For some participants, their families were like their "support group" [C-FG3], helping them to figure out how to merge into a new society, sharing each other's frustrations with language, struggling together and finding solutions together. Participants migrating with larger families benefited from the advice and support they received from their parents and siblings. Consultations with family assisted with decision making, while sharing problems with family helped them to de-stress as family members offered advice, alternatives and shared their experiences (e.g., in high school). As one young participant shared:

I think my family was super important. When I moved here, I moved here with my mother, grandmother and my brother, right. So, it was just the four of us ... we had to support each other, right, our family had to support each other through the whole learning processes of ... immigrating here. So, I feel like I really couldn't have done it without my family. [C-FG18]

Participants described how parents who had migrated before them helped with settlement processes. They described how parents offered emotional and moral support, helped them to feel calmer and motivated them to learn English, pushing them to keep studying and working harder to achieve career aspirations. They also described instances of parents and children helping each other to resolve settlement issues, for instance:

... me and my parents ... we helped each other ... they helped me with school stuff ... and I helped them with some technology stuff. So ... we help each other and we're moving forward together. [C-FG9]

Participants were grateful for their parents' decision to migrate and considered it a blessing to be in Canada. They were also grateful for the sacrifices their parents made to leave their countries and communities behind and migrate to a new country for their children's benefit. However, participants also expressed sadness at observing their parents working so hard and trying to find jobs. As one participant explained:

... the family is an important thing in everyone's lives. My family, they left their country just because of me and my brother ... And they just left their country just because of our education ... they sacrifice ... just because of us. So it means the family is everything ... especially for me. They are everything ... [C-FG12]

Several discussions indicated that parents, children and siblings supported each other, reciprocating and paying forward the support they received from each other. Participants who received support from older siblings, for example, supported their younger siblings with their studies. Participants whose parents were busy working and earning with no time to learn English, were teaching their parents English as well as taking care of the housework and paperwork. Their appreciation for the help and support given by their families motivated them to persevere and strive in their own lives, and to give back to their parents, as one participant said, "[I] just want to give them a better life" [C-FG2]. Another participant shared:

... my mum, who's a single mother taking care of all five of my siblings and me, supports us in every way she can ... She always tries her best, and I think she eventually became my goal to succeed. And so that, in the future, I can help her do [the] things she wants, just like she did for me. [C-FG14]

Participants described the importance of extended family members, uncles, aunts, grandmothers and cousins who had migrated before them and who were settled in Canadian society. Extended family members had provided initial accommodation, material support and importance resources. They had also assisted parents with language and documentation, as well as assisting participants with the transition to a new school and education system.

Extended families living in Canada also helped by sharing their experiences of settlement and by being able to speak the same language. However, for participants who had no extended family, their immediate family became even more important. Some participants considered their friends as family members and benefited from their support. One participant had no extended family in Canada, so other native Canadians, who helped and cared for his welfare, became "... my family, my big family" [C-FG18]. They also described keeping in touch with friends in their native country, to cope with the initial loneliness and for friendship.

Separated from family. Many participants were separated from their immediate or extended family members and this caused them sadness, grief and guilt for not being able to share their current good fortune in settlement with their extended family and friends. Some had migrated with their spouses, leaving parents and siblings behind; others had migrated with siblings, leaving parents behind. Most had left extended family members behind and missed them. This dilemma of participants is depicted in the following extract: ‘

... because most of my family and friends are still back home ... it's hard for me to really settle here because I feel guilty that I'm here. Because there's a lot of resources here ... So I think I'm struggling to truly settle because I still feel guilty ... I feel like they should also experience the benefits I have and I don't know if I'm deserving of th[is] stuff. [C-FG15]

Others were worried about the safety of family members left behind amidst conflict and war. Talking about separated family members was sometimes emotionally overwhelming and participants wept when reminiscing about them and thinking about their present plight. A few also mentioned family break-ups after long-term separation, caused by stepwise migration of family members.

Some participants described feeling conflicted: they had migrated for better opportunities which also meant leaving loved ones behind. Others were trying to find a compromise by contemplating returning after a few years. One young participant who had decided to join her father in Canada shared the emotional anguish she experienced:

I feel like, oh my God, mum, I am going to leave you, I don't want to, but my opportunity ... because this opportunity ... [I] will not have it again. So [I] have to wait until [I] see [my] family again and go to the opportunity ... [C-FG8]

Acculturation gap. Participants described the misunderstandings they had with their parents who were from a different generation and grew up in a different environment. As one young participant reflected, “it is part of being an immigrant family” [C-FG16]. Others explained that their parents had been raised in a particular environment while they had been exposed to a new culture. Participants were trying to adapt to that new culture and sometimes parents had a hard time accepting it. They described the unrealistic expectations of their parents and how they were trying to adapt to the differences, while arriving at some compromise with their parents. However, others also mentioned the stress caused by their parents’ demands:

Stress as a young man now is [from] parents [who] keep saying when you grow up, you need to be that person, be that, be that ... that's very stressing ... So, we have to think about what people want from us, what they want us to be, but real life ... I want to be me; I want to be who I am ... [C-FG16]

The struggle to find one’s own identity while also navigating the acculturation gap between participants and their parents was aptly described by one young participant as follows:

It's mostly a sense when we moved from a different culture, different society, they wanted to hold onto ... the essence of that culture ... being able to adapt to being in a new culture was a bit ... rocky because I was navigating through their expectations of holding onto that sort of culture, but also being able to fit in and ... adapt to this new culture. [C-FG9]

Family responsibilities. While many young people described increased family responsibilities—whether it was supporting families with language, documentation and/or household chores—most participants in Canada appeared not to be too burdened by these added responsibilities, according to their focus group narratives. Some participants mentioned that as the eldest, they were responsible for helping with documents and teaching younger siblings English. But this was not considered an onerous responsibility, more something that gave them pride to be able to contribute to their family learning new things. As one young participant explained:

... when I arrived, I was the only one that spoke English. So I was the translator. So I worked with them ... even with the bank, the house, every part that they went, I was there. And it was good, because if there was a problem, the three of us went ... to solve it ... [C-FG17]

This participant believed that his parents would later need to learn English as he had other responsibilities, such as work, study and meeting friends. Others perceived that supporting their family was an opportunity to reciprocate the support they had received from their parents. As another young participant shared:

... I really love [my parents] and I really love what I am doing for them, because I know they don't have anyone else than me to help them ...

Sometimes I feel it is hard but I am happy with it,
because they offer me like everything.

So this is just a small thing that I can offer them.

USA

Family support. Participants in the USA described how they had been supported by immediate family members during their US settlement. For some participants, family provided a “place to feel safe” [U-FG12] or a “safe spot” [U-FG13] when they were facing difficulties during the settlement process. Their family offered cultural safety by helping to uphold cultural practices and offering a space where participants could embrace their native culture. Others said that their family offered support and strength during difficult periods when they were struggling to adapt to settlement changes. One participant said, “my parents were my number 1 supporters” [U-FG9] and another shared that his/her family had “always been supportive of whatever I wanted to do” [U-FG6]. Participants shared how their family had given them emotional support; as well as the confidence and trust that they could rely on their family to defend them and give good advice:

I know he [dad] wants what's best for me because I know he has good intentions at heart. So I can always trust what he says. [U-FG2]

Participants were also appreciative of the support of extended family members—aunts, cousins and others—who were already residing in the United States (USA). Extended family members provided a support system to ease their settlement stressors and help them to feel comfortable, as well as providing temporary accommodation and support at school. Some participants were looking forward to extending similar support to newer migrants to the United States (US).

... so they were a big part of getting comfortable and settling ... and we're very grateful to have them. And now when we have family back in ... that want to come here, we can help them to really settle. [U-FG12]

Participants expressed their gratitude to their parents for migrating, and for the hard work and sacrifices of parents so their children could have more opportunities and a better future. Several participants expressed their desire to reciprocate this support to their parents while some were also feeling the pressure to succeed so they could support their parents. As one young participant shared:

... it was basically like a wake-up call ... you came here; you have to do well so you can support your parents. So there was kind of stress. But definitely, my family has been a very strong pillar to where I am now today ... he [dad] was still there, being the most supportive parent, the best parent I could ask for. So I feel like I owe him back. [U-FG2]

Family responsibilities and unrealistic expectations. Participants in the US described the many family responsibilities they had because their parents were not fluent in English or did not know much about the US system. They were taking on a parenting role by helping parents with groceries, with transport, at the doctors, and to pay utility bills and taxes. While these matters were not difficult, taking care of family responsibilities while attending university and working was considered stressful. One person said that "... sometimes it feels like you are a parent for your parent" [U-FG3]. Another participant said:

I had a good bunch of responsibility [by] the age of 18 ... it felt like it gave me more responsibility than what my age is. I felt like I got mature earlier. [U-FG3]

Gendered expectations were experienced with female participants called on to help with household chores, such as washing dishes, when they were also trying to do their schoolwork.

My mom usually calls me to do it, even if ... my brother is ... not doing anything. She doesn't call him at all because that's not their job. So yeah, whenever I'm doing work and stuff, she still calls me and it really bugs me a lot. [U-FG6]

Participants also shared other family challenges. Some participants had been pressured by family "not to lose my culture" [U-FG12], with many sharing differences between the generations over cultural and lifestyle choices. They explained the generational gap caused by older family members being grounded in the native culture and young people growing up in the United States (USA). One participant shared, at length, their mental health struggles due to the lack of parental acceptance and support for being part of the LGBTQ community:

... I wish that I had support from my parents when it comes to being a part of the LGBTQ community. That's been one of the main reasons why my mental health has been such a struggle and I have ... stress and anxiety and depression; just them never understanding that concept, yeah, that whole thing. [U-FG12]

A few participants described their parents as not being good at communicating emotionally, as well as having unrealistic expectations for academic achievement without considering participants' mental health concerns. Overly critical parents who disagreed with young people's lifestyle (e.g., septum piercing) or career choices (e.g., fashion designer) also caused stress.

Others mentioned being reluctant or feeling scared to share problems or concerns with their parents because they did not want to worry their parents or to disappoint them. As one participant said:

... sometimes because they worry so much and they get so concerned and often maybe because they have ... some big concerns of their own ... you feel like you can't share some stuff because you don't want to ... put even more of a load on them, considering all that they're handling themselves. [U-FG13]

Two siblings recalled their initial struggle to settle in the USA because their parents had not informed them they were permanently migrating to the USA; instead, they believed they were going to the USA for a holiday. The consequent confusion, distress and hurt they experienced resulted in taking a much longer time to settle and be happy in the United States (USA). As the male sibling explained:

... moving here was ... difficult because my parents were not straight up. We were little kids when we came here ... we thought it was going to be a vacation. And when we came here, my parents said we're going to stay here so I didn't even get to say a proper goodbye. And I didn't really get any ... emotional support from my family for the move here. [U-FG5]

Separated from family. Several participants were separated from their immediate or extended family members living overseas. Some felt distant from their extended families overseas as they did not speak the native language or felt the presence of a cultural 'divide' between them. One young participant mentioned being separated from both parents due to family conflict and although he did not wish to share more details for personal reasons, described this experience as the “*darkest time of my life*” [U-FG9].

This participant, who had been separated from both his parents, later described how he had learned to adapt to his unique circumstances. In doing so, he seemed to be resonating the resilience, perseverance and adaptation skills of participants in the USA when he said:

So it was much harder, to be honest, growing up like that, but that I'm grateful for where I am now because of all my hard work. I got to where I actually want to be, even though there was some delay in the process ... but I don't see it as that. I see it as a part of life, that you're learning and growing at the same time. [U-FG9]

Stress, coping and help seeking

AUSTRALIA

Participants in Australia shared what “stress” meant to them. They said that it was feeling panicky, jittery and on edge, and feeling weighed down, anxious and overthinking. They also mentioned that when they were stressed, they could get grumpy, feel exhausted and become agitated and angry over little things. A few shared more intense physical reactions such as feeling faint, and sensing that their heart was racing and their vision was becoming blurry. Some participants said they were isolating themselves from others, were getting headaches, and could not eat, sleep or focus.

Most participants had frantic lifestyles attending school or university, study-related activities, employment, household chores, and other family-related responsibilities and demands. They were often overwhelmed as one participant described

I have too many things going on in my life; it's like I don't know what to focus on and I don't know what to put first ... I don't even know what to do with my life because ... I stress a lot. My family is one, school is one and outside of my life is one and it's really stressful for me to think about what I want to do and who I want to be as a person ... that's what I think stress is. [A-FG6]

A major stressor related to schoolwork. This included meeting school deadlines, preparing for assignments, tests and exams, accompanied by the fear of not passing or getting a good grade needed for university. Another related major stressor was about the future and the fear that they would not succeed, the fear of not meeting their own expectations and those of their family, and of not giving their family a better life. One participant stated that “I’m their retirement plan” [A-FG16], regarding his/her parents’ dependence on him/her.

One of the main problems with schoolwork was the struggle to gain proficiency in a new language. The problem relating to language proficiency was identified as one of the main reasons for the stress they experienced in relation to studies. In terms of a solution, the emphasis was on long-term language support instead of a short course of 6–12 months. The problems encountered with language were aptly described as follows:

Also, my next worry is the language; it's so difficult to gain knowledge compared to Aussie student[s]. They study ... 12 years and then ... we have to do whatever they did in 12 years; we have to [do] in just ... two years ... [Also] I can't speak fluently; how can they compare my writing to that of the Australian student? [A-FG9]

As a solution, emphasis was given to the need for long-term language support instead of a short course of 6–12 months.

Another major stressor related to participants’ family responsibilities, including the added burden of older siblings in larger families, single parent households and/or when parents did not speak English. Participants were then called upon to take on many household responsibilities, such as attending to paperwork, paying bills and rent, enrolling siblings at school, accompanying their parents to appointments and translating for their parents. These stressors were described by one participant:

So it's very stressful, because I'm also the person in the family where, if I don't call AGL, then the [electricity] bill won't be put on a plan. If I don't call the ambulance, then we won't get ambulance cover. If I don't call insurance, then the insurance won't be sorted ... I have to sign all my siblings' consent forms ... It's just a lot. It's a lot ... [A-FG14]

Participants also discussed stress caused by conflict with their parents about their career choice, confusion with their own career choice and financial concerns. Stress related to employment was also mentioned by several participants including either the inability to find work or encountering bullying, harassment and discrimination in the workplace. Employment-related stress was acute when their parents were at home and either sick or unemployed: financial pressures were exerted on young people even though they could not find suitable and adequately paid employment.

Several young people experienced stress as they were worried about the safety and security of their parents or other immediate family members living overseas in dangerous situations.

Despite their stressors and worries, participants in Australia were utilising numerous coping and self-care strategies to manage their stressful environments and situations. When requested, participants shared a variety of coping strategies and resources, as well as self-care measures that they used. Coping resources and strategies identified by participants were broadly categorised as: (a) talking to and spending time with family and friends; (b) sporting activities; (c) spirituality; and (d) ancillary activities.

Participants in Australia reported that when they were experiencing stress, they were able to manage it by talking with friends, going out, partying and spending time with friends. The most popular sporting activity was workouts at the gym, as well as playing various types of sport, walking, swimming and dancing. A few participants also mentioned spiritual activities such as practising mindfulness and meditating, praying and reading the Bible. As one person shared:

... spiritual belief definitely helps a lot ... knowing there's God helping us out in every aspect of our life definitely helps ... [A-FG23m]

Other strategies that participants experiencing stress found to be of benefit included sleeping or taking power naps, listening to or 'blasting' music, reading, writing, cleaning one's room, shopping, playing with their birds and browsing their phone. As one participant shared:

[my coping strategy] is [my] phone ... It's changed my life; it's changed my mood ... Just like that, I don't know why but ... especially TikTok, oh my God ... it just feels nice when you use your phone on the bed and ... when eating ... it's heaven. [A-FG9]

Some participants also reached out to others when they needed help. Most often, they sought help from informal sources, such as their parents, siblings and friends. More formal sources of help seeking included consulting a psychologist, therapist or counsellor, visiting an academic advisor or talking to a teacher at school. Also mentioned were help from general practitioners (GPs), settlement support agencies, such as AMRC and MYSA, or other agencies specialising in supporting young people (e.g., Headspace).

Several participants shared their difficulties in seeking help as they had grown up believing that asking for help was not okay, or due to the community and cultural stigma attached to mental health concerns, or through being discouraged by loved ones. The stigma of seeking professional help was described by one young participant as follows:

I think I told someone ... I'd gone to Headspace before. And ... she was shocked that I'd gone to ... seek out help. But it's because of the community ... and the stigma around ... I know we talk about mental health quite a lot. But we don't talk enough about the support. We're not very accepting about the support. There's stigma around going to therapy. It's a big thing ... in my community at least. [A-FG14]

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CANADA

Participants in Canada shared what stress and worry meant to them. They said it was overthinking a problem and becoming overwhelmed by pressures; being overworked; poor planning; or uncertainty about the future. Stress was also having to do too many things and having inadequate time to do them. It was an overwhelming sense of burden, shutting down and burnout, feelings of losing control or not being good enough, and a lack of motivation. One participant acknowledged that stress was “*something normal in life ...*” [C-FG3] and experienced by everyone.

As participants in Canada were mostly attending secondary school or in their initial year at university, most of their stressors and worries were school-related or “educational stress” [C-FG12]. They were experiencing stress after studying too much, overthinking about studies or worrying about not getting good grades, not passing or not getting into university. Some were worrying about not getting through the first year at university. School grades and marks, tests and assignments, and meeting their deadlines were causing the most stress. One participant explained the reasons for his/her level of stress:

... because I came late last year, so I didn't [attend school] from the beginning of the year. So ... this year, in Grade 12, I have a lot of hard courses at the same time. And so, yeah, that's stressing me out. [C-FG17]

The other major stressor related to participants' expression and fluency in the English language which was impacting their academic performance and confidence. Several participants described their struggles to learn English and how it was negatively impacting their mental health, as one participant shared:

... sometimes language can make me stressed because you are speaking another language; and speaking from [one] language to another foreign language. That [is] too hard for us. Everything is different. I sometimes ... felt like 'oh, my God, what should I do?' [C-FG12]

Some participants were experiencing confusion about their future and were worrying about selecting the “right” career pathway as Canada had too many options available. Others were experiencing conflict with their parents regarding their career choice and they also talked about being stressed due to their lack of knowledge about Canadian systems.

Another key stressor for participants related to having to juggle family responsibilities, studies, employment and parental expectations. Family responsibilities of participants in single parent families or with parents who did not speak English or as older children were especially burdensome. Some participants regarded their role as being that of a parent, as one participant described:

... [my] family ... they're really dependent on me especially that I'm the oldest kid ... if they needed to apply for something, it's always me ... especially that my English is better ... [This] is okay, I'm very happy [about it], but sometimes it gets really overwhelming that I have to do everything. And I also work ... [C-FG9]

Participants compared their burden to that of their friends and colleagues who had time to “hang out” after school or join clubs or communities. Another participant shared his/her anguish regarding family responsibilities and unrealistic parental expectations:

... since my parents didn't really know English and I was ... learning English, I had to translate a lot of things ... government things, or ... things that I didn't know. I felt really frustrated because my parents would get really mad at me for not being able to translate ... that made me really sad, because you know, I was still learning English as well ... I was also really angry at them for not understanding that I'm also in a new environment. [C-FG2]

Other stressors identified by participants included the inability to find employment, missing their parents and extended family members living overseas, making friends at school and financial concerns regarding paying bills and taxes.

Despite their stressors and worries, participants in Canada were also utilising numerous coping and self-care strategies to manage their stressful environments and situations. Participants shared a variety of coping strategies and resources which could be broadly categorised as: (a) seeking help from family, friends and others; (b) sporting activities; (c) spirituality; (d) self-motivation; and (e) ancillary strategies.

Participants sought out friends, parents and teachers for advice and support, and spent time with friends. They engaged in various sporting activities such as going for walks, taking the dog for a walk, exercises and visiting the gym, biking, going fishing, or playing soccer and badminton. In terms of spiritual activities, they prayed or talked to God, maintained a close relationship with God, read the Bible or the Quran, went to church and/or meditated.

Other strategies they used included listening to and playing music, reading, sleeping or napping, taking a few hours off work or taking time off to do something personally meaningful. They also engaged in art, photography or other hobbies (e.g., robotics), cooking, watching movies or TV shows. A few participants also engaged in self-motivation and self-talk, striving for self-improvement and trying to see the best of everything. Some strategies helping these participants were described as follows:

-
- *just getting small things done first and then just having the satisfaction that, yes, you were able to complete some things [C-FG18]*
 - *suck it up and ... just deal with it [C-FG2]*
 - *write down what the problem [is] and what makes me so stressed and angry and after that throw it in the rubbish [C-FG7]*
 - *continuing to mention [to] myself that my goal is to go to a good university [C-FG8]*
-

Participants in Canada also reached out for both formal and informal support. Informal support included parents, older siblings and friends. The most popular formal supports included guidance counsellors and teachers at school, and the settlement support service, Newcomer Centre of Peel (NCP), which offered a plethora of supports for young people and their families.

I asked for a lot of help from [name], she's a worker at NCP. She helped me a lot when I first came ... she helped me and my mom. She is nice ... [C-FG12]

Some participants believed that to be Canadian was to receive support and that they received ample support when they initially migrated to Canada. Mixed feelings were expressed about consulting a psychologist with some participants saying “those people help” [C-FG14] or that they were “scared of going to therapy” [C-FG3]. Some indicated that they had confidence to seek professional help if they needed it, while acknowledging that not seeking professional help was a common misconception within their cultural communities.

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Participants shared a variety of coping strategies and resources which could be broadly categorised as:

1. seeking help from family, friends and others;
2. sporting activities;
3. spirituality;
4. self-motivation; and
5. ancillary strategies.

USA

Participants in the USA shared their understanding of what constituted stress and worry. According to them, stress was getting angry at little things, feeling overwhelmed or feeling that everything was getting out of hand. Their definition of stress included experiencing difficulties in prioritising and time management, feeling emotionally drained, and overthinking past occurrences and future uncertainties. Stress was also underperforming, losing confidence and thinking of many “worst-case scenarios” [U-FG13]. Others shared their view that stress was caused by the known as well as the unknown/uncertain; that it was not wanting to deal with situations; and the inability to maintain a life balance, that is, between schoolwork and paid work.

A few participants described more serious physical symptoms of stress such as a fast heart rate, shaking hands or cold hands, shivering, panic attacks, paranoia, respiratory problems, crying and disrupted sleep routines. One participant explained his/her experience of stress as follows:

Me, personally, when I know I'm stressed is ... because there's just way too much on my plate. ... [or] I start things, I have initiative to do things, but I can't finish them. And then it causes more stress because I have so many things piled up at once. [U-FG6]

Several participants were experiencing stress related to education and schooling. They were stressed with the school workload and trying to maintain a grade point average (GPA) required for college; they worried about getting good grades or that their grades were not good enough. They also described being stressed through having a perfectionist attitude, by high expectations for their academic performance and trying to be one of the best. One participant expressed the opinion that, through growing up in California, one learned to adapt or succumb to the pressure because everything was very fast paced there.

The future was especially stressful for many participants. Some struggled with the uncertainty or the unknown about the future; others worried about selecting a wrong career path, about finding good jobs after studies, about scholarships and paying for college and whether they needed more qualifications to be competitive. As one participant explained:

I don't want to be a failure, you know? I'm trying to work out, I'm trying to get good grades, I'm trying to be healthy, I'm trying to be a good friend, I'm trying to be a good son, I'm trying to be a good brother. Just ... thinking about being a failure, that's what stresses me out. [U-FG5]

High expectations and pressure to excel from parents, worry about supporting their parents in their older age, inability to achieve goals and body image issues were also discussed. Other stressors included feeling lonely or left out, financial stress and cost of living (e.g., not having adequate savings led to feeling stressed and unsafe); as well as general concerns including the performance of the national economy and whether artificial intelligence (AI) would take over the workplace. One participant shared the stress of having parents who did not believe in stress or mental health problems:

... my parents don't really believe in stress or mental health ... But I would have to say that school and the pressure from maybe my parents, I don't know, but that created a lot of stress for me ... my parents have always said anxiety, you don't have anxiety, anxiety isn't real, blah, blah, blah. I don't know. They see mental health as a myth, so it's very hard to try and convince them ... [U-FG13]

With their stressors and worries, participants in the USA shared their coping strategies and resources that helped them to de-stress and calm down. Participant reported that when they were experiencing stress, spending time with friends and family, for example, talking to parents and being helped to calm down were important. Other participants were benefiting from self-help books and self-improvement courses, therapy, meditation and praying. Physical workouts and going to the gym (identified as the “magic pill” [U-FG3]), as well as a variety of sporting activities were also identified: dancing, running, biking, weightlifting, volleyball and soccer.

Ancillary activities included playing a musical instrument and listening to music, playing video games, social media, and watching movies or TV. Other activities mentioned were sleeping, drawing and sketching, gardening and watering plants, drinking Boba tea and travelling. A few also reported that they benefited from being alone with their own thoughts, changing their perspective, that is, seeing things as challenges instead of pressure, as well as by planning and organising. One participant shared his/her systematic approach to strategising to manage stress levels as follows:

My throat will start to close up. I try to ... stay ... isolated from other people; if it's a big crowd, I will try to go to a secluded place to calm down. And I will try to raise my serotonin levels which is a happy chemical inside the brain. And I will generally try to wait, probably think about my options and what I can logically do. And then try to see the basic solutions and reasoning before I actually do it ... [U-FG12]

Participants from the USA also reached out to both formal and informal support. The informal support they sought included from parents, siblings and friends. Some acceptance of formal help seeking (e.g., therapy) was stated, with several participants sharing that they received help from therapists and school counsellors. As one participant said, “I would say I’m getting comfortable in asking for help” [U-FG6].

Another participant reported that, while she benefited from having someone listen to her, she was uncomfortable disclosing to people she did not know. As she said:

I don't like keeping it in, I would love it if somebody would sit ... and listen to me. And preferably agree with me, and not call me dramatic, and help me through it. But someone that's not a therapist because I don't really like talking to people that I don't know [U-FG2]

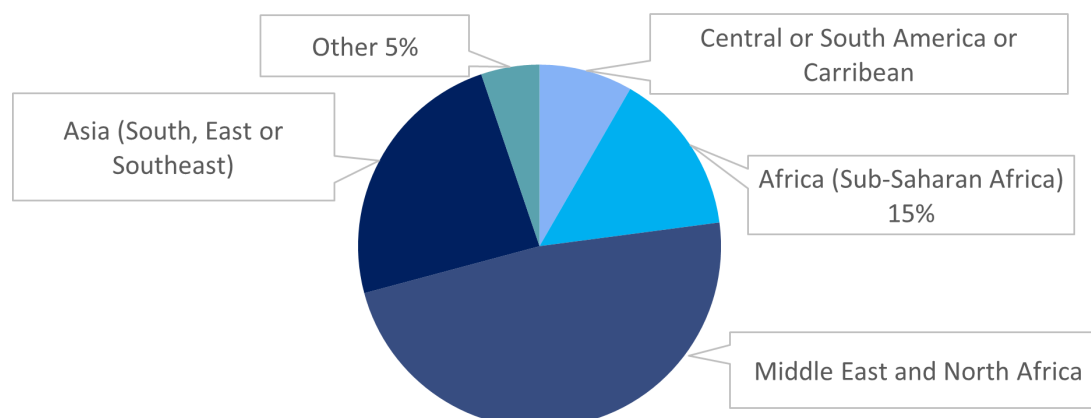
Focus groups with parents/caregivers

Most participants in the focus groups (FGs) with parents/caregivers were female (84%). As with the composition of FGs for young people, most parent/caregiver interviews in Australia were with those who had a refugee background while, in the USA, they were almost exclusively with those from a non-refugee migrant background who had migrated to the USA from the Middle East and North Africa. Hence, almost half of parent/caregiver participants had a background in the Middle East or North Africa (48%), as shown in Figure 21. The Canadian sample included almost equal proportions of refugee and non-refugee background participants.

Table 3 Sociodemographic information of parents/caregivers' focus groups (18, N=96)

Gender	Female	84.4%
	Male	15.6%
Country of Settlement	Australia	46.9%
	Canada	28.1%
	USA	25.0%
Migration Status	Refugee	51%
	Migrant	46.9%
	Other/unsure	2%
Education Level	No formal education	16.0%
	Primary school	11.7%
	High School	11.7%
	Undergraduate	25.5%
	Postgraduate	25.5%
	Other e.g. Diploma	8.5%
Employment Status	1-5 years	0.6%
	6-10 years	54.6%
	11-15 years	23.9%
	>15 years	11.7%
Time in Settlement	1-5 years	55.2%
	6-10 years	16.3%
	11-15 years	13.5%
	>15 years	8.3%

Figure 21: Regional background of parent/caregiver focus group participants



Acculturation and belonging

AUSTRALIA

Australian parent/caregiver participants were grateful to be in Australia due to the safety and security for themselves and their families and the opportunities afforded to their children. In expressing their gratitude, they were also comparing their precarious situations in the midst of violence, conflict and war before migration. As one participant said:

I'm happy for my children ... that they are safe in here [and] when they go out ... I don't feel like they might not come back. [A-FG4]

They shared their appreciation for the health care facilities, income support (Centrelink) and other assistance extended to them through settlement agencies and support workers. Several parent/caregiver participants were comforted by the multicultural nature of Australian society to which people had migrated from around the world, from diverse backgrounds, cultures and religions.

... Australia is a place where people from around the world and different cultures are ... all coming here. And we mingle with people from every culture and background. And all different, they have the same, or similar stories like us in one or another way. So we feel quite happy ... [A-FG7]

Most participants still struggled to learn and communicate in English and had been exposed to limited educational opportunities pre-migration. However, they were attending English classes at TAFE and striving to learn English as well as to pass the citizenship test, a requirement for obtaining Australian citizenship for all applicants aged below 65 years.

Most parent/caregiver participants did not indicate experiencing exclusion, racism or discrimination. Some mentioned isolated incidents from neighbours or in the community and some of their children had reported being bullied at school. A few participants, however, reported experiences of hostile racism associated with visible markers that then negatively impacted their sense of belonging.

CANADA

Most parent/caregiver participants said they were happy to be in Canada. They described how the freedom, democracy and multiculturalism with the ability to celebrate festivals together with others gave them a sense of belonging. Others mentioned safety, peace and opportunities for education for their children. Most important was the help they received from many organisations, including the Newcomer Centre of Peel (NCP), to learn English, to find jobs and address other settlement needs. They considered Canadians to be friendly, kind and helpful. As one participant shared:

I feel so blessed and great to be in Canada. Why? Because ... Canada is a great place that has ... respect for all, and it's [a] multicultural society ... So they help you, [ir]respective of your race, your colour; there is love for everyone ... I feel blessed that my children are privileged to experience the wonders and the educational sector of this land. So it's a great place. [C-FG1]

Most parent/caregiver participants had not experienced discrimination or “bad” experiences except with learning a new language and communicating in English due to “accents”. They also recounted the initial worries they had about settling in a new culture and a new country, about the severe weather and difficulty securing suitable employment. However, the help and support received had smoothed their settlement journey and facilitated their sense of belonging. A few mentioned the stress they experienced at leaving behind all things familiar and starting again in a new environment, as one participant said:

...when you leave your country ... you are sure to leave everything there—everything. Your home ... your job, everything. And suddenly you have left, and suddenly you came to another environment. It ... make[s] people exhausted ... [C-FG6]

USA

Most parent/caregiver participants in the USA expressed a sense of belonging to both the USA and their native country. They belonged to both societies and had two homes, with the USA being their second home.

So, I feel I've got two homes, one here and the other one over there. For me it's 50-50. [U-FG1]

Several participants explained that they belonged to the USA and that the USA was their home as it was where they lived with their children and as their native community within the USA gave them a sense of belonging. As one participant said:

I'm a US citizen, and I feel that 70% of me is American and 30% ... because I am working here and I'm active, also my children are here ... [U-FG1]

Leaving family members behind in the native country gave them a feeling of belonging in both places with one participant admitting her “heart is torn apart” [U-FG1]—between the USA and the native country. Others said that the diversity of society (in California), the opportunities to work and study, and the freedom they enjoyed made them feel American. However, when they experienced discrimination due to their accent, ethnicity or religion, that sense of belonging was taken away.

Family relationships

AUSTRALIA

Several parent/caregiver participants were grateful to husbands and fathers who had sought asylum in Australia 7–10 years ago and had worked tirelessly to pave the way for the rest of their families to migrate to Australia. They also acknowledged the support of immediate and extended family members who had migrated before. As one participant said:

... when I came here, it was quite easy for me because I already had my family members here who [were] very supporting. [A-FG7]

When participants did not have family or friends in Australia, they relied on settlement workers, with these workers becoming part of their extended family. Describing the invaluable support offered by a settlement worker, one participant shared:

S... [at AMRC] helped [us] the most. ... when [we] first came here [we] didn't know how to buy rice and [we] didn't even know ... the suburb [we] lived in and [we] went all the way [to the] city to get ... rice ... but S... helped [us] with everything, telling [us] the nearest place that [we] can shop ... and that's how S... helped [us] ... he told [us] everything. [A-FG5]

Many parent/caregiver participants had left immediate or extended family members behind in their native country or in a neighbouring country. Those who had married children, as well as other family members, living in conflict zones worried for their safety. Others, while grieving for separated loved ones, were determined to reunite with them in Australia. As another participant said:

... I have ... three children, two boys, one girl. My girl is in [native country] ... the agency ... told me ... I can apply for my daughter and bring her here. That is not the truth. I have to pay a lot of money to bring her here. And it's more difficult because she is 25. She is married ... I live here with my two sons ... it's very sad. Everybody is sad. Because [we've] always been together. [A-FG12]

CANADA

The importance of immediate family during the initial settlement phases was discussed in several Canadian FGs for parents/caregivers. Participants described how parents and children relied upon each other to adapt to their new society. Some parent/caregiver participants had been supported by extended family members who had migrated before (e.g., siblings), and they also described receiving settlement help from community, neighbours and friends, both from their native country and Canadian. Others described solely relying on their family unit, as one participant shared:

I appreciate that ... my husband gives me a lot of support and encourages me to ... go to the school to learn the language from the beginning. And my kids and son also create a lovely time and I still feel that I have this small family and [we] belong to each other, and we spend a lot of nice time[s] ... when I saw the picture now in my phone I said, oh really, really we enjoy here in Canada, really enjoy. [C-FG1]

Separation from family members, such as married children and their families and elderly parents, was a cause for deep sadness. Parent/caregiver participants described the stress and anxiety of being separated from large extended families and the challenge of maintaining these relationships across the miles. Young people felt a sense of helplessness when people in their home country needed help as they could not be present in person to solve these problems. Some described coping with the stress by focusing on the progress of their immediate family and praying for those who were far away.

USA

Several parent/caregiver participants discussed the support received from extended family members or friends from their native community. Those who did not have extended family in the USA described immediate family members helping each other, for instance, how children helped parents learn English and parents helped children settle into school and society. As one participant shared,

... when you immigrate with your family ... you don't feel like you are lonely and it gives you a sense of power to move forward and to do your best for yourself and your family ... [U-FG4]

Nonetheless, parent/caregiver participants worried about the changing family dynamics in a new society, sharing their concerns about their children becoming more “American” and losing their cultural values, such as caring for parents. Some female parent/caregiver participants were stressed about their inability to secure adequate employment and about losing their independence after migration, as well as being worried about family conflict as a consequence of migration.

Stress and coping

AUSTRALIA

As previously mentioned, one main worry for parent/caregiver participants was the safety of their children or their extended family members living overseas.

[I am] also worried about [my] daughters; [I] ha[ve] two daughters in [native country]. And one of [my] daughters lost her husband too ... and she has five children. [A-FG4]

A few were worried about their children's culturally inappropriate behaviours and safety in Australia (e.g., substance use and criminal activities) and were taking measures to send their children back to the native country to be grounded in more cultural ways of being. Other stressors identified were the cost of living, finding suitable and affordable housing and being “forced to look for work” [A-FG7] by the government despite their limited language proficiency.

When asked about how they managed to cope with stressors and worries, parent/caregiver participants shared a variety of coping strategies that they utilised. These strategies included religion and spiritual practices (reading the Bible, praying or talking to God), spending time and sharing with friends and engaging in meaningful and relaxing activities (e.g., singing, walking, gardening). As one participant said:

so when [I] read the Bible ... [I] feel less worry because [I] trust in God's word because the Bible is God's word; so whenever [I] pray and read the Bible [I] feel less worry that God has the best plan for all of us. [A-FG5]

CANADA

The main stressors identified by parent/caregiver participants in Canada included communicating in English, finding suitable housing and paying rent, and job insecurity. However, one participant aptly described the overall challenges of settlement as follows:

I think the challenge for us ... is not ...only the language. I think the culture is very important for us to understand ... Canadian culture ... is very different from our own country. So many government policies or customs or other behaviour standard[s] ... They are all new for us ... maybe it is a long process for us to really understand ... this Canadian culture. I think it's a big challenge for us. [C-FG2]

Parent/caregiver participants also shared how they managed their stressors and found time to relax. These coping strategies included: playing a game of chess, enjoying beautiful scenery, praying, meditation, yoga, walking, exercising at the gym and shopping. Some participants also described benefiting from joining and participating in community centre activities with their children and spending time with family and friends.

I found a very good place in Canada. It's a community centre ... All the people can gather in this place. You can take part in all kinds of activities ... So it's very, very important for all people to have a community life ... So you can resolve your many problems. I think it's a very good place. [C-FG5]

USA

Parent/caregiver participants in the USA recounted the hardships of the first years of settlement, the initial homesickness and the need to frequently return to the native country to alleviate homesickness. Others countered that, stating that returning to the native country made their homesickness feel worse.

They also described their valiant attempts to adapt to the new environment by learning and connecting to friends and family overseas, as well as with their native country's community in California. Their coping strategies included yoga and meditation, sports, socialising with people, accessing professional help and maintaining hope. Two participants shared their coping strategies as follows:

I try to overcome [problems] by talking to someone who can help me without judging me because it takes the stress out of my chest. It helps me understand that this is everyone's problem, and I can overcome it. It's not only for me. So we can face the problems. [U-FG1]

One is hope, hope to have a brighter future, and hope ... causes you to have motivation. So maybe using that motivation. And if you see that you have [made] progress, you could progress well. So it causes you to be more relaxed. [U-FG4]

Summary of findings: Overall well-being in settlement

The overall well-being of young people and their families in settlement is summarised below under the subheadings: (1) acculturation and belonging; (2) family relationships; (3) stress, coping and help seeking. A separate section for (4) parent and caregivers is also included.

Acculturation and belonging

Most young participants indicated a sense of belonging to their new society owing to the safety, freedom and opportunity to pursue their education that migration afforded them. The multiculturalism prevalent in all three societies (South Australia, Ontario, California) and the ability to participate and celebrate cultural festivals and events promoted participants' sense of belonging. While the "kindness of Canadians" was highlighted by participants in Canada, in the USA, gender equality was important for participants. Many participants also mixed aspects of their native and migration country cultures to arrive at their own unique cultural blend, resonating with the integration strategy of acculturation [42]. Participants generally had a higher affiliation with their ethnic identity compared to the national identity in each country, but regardless, these both identities were linked to well-being outcomes as well as to overall perceptions of feeling accepted (as shown through the prevalence of discrimination experiences).

The survey indicated the complexity of the language repertoires of participants from migration backgrounds across the three countries. These participants moved between public spaces where English language was required for interactions and access, and private spaces where they used multiple languages, most of which were not English. The focus groups (FGs) showed that the initial years of settlement were challenging for participants as they learnt a new language, made friends and acquainted themselves with new systems and ways of living. Hence, a few participants in Australia and USA had not developed that sense of "emotional" belonging to their new society. Feeling excluded, receiving different treatment and experiences of racism had a negative effect on participants' sense of belonging.

The survey findings showed how critical experiences of discrimination were for participants' well-being. The survey showed how crucial these effects were across its large sample, while the FGs enabled a deeper understanding of how these issues played out in the different country contexts. In the survey, the negative impact of discrimination on well-being was countered by the positive effects of a strong sense of identity, combined with support from family or from their educational institution. Participants who had lived for longer in their settlement country reported higher rates of discrimination over time. In the FGs, participants in Australia and Canada shared stories of experiencing both subtle and hostile/blatant racism [see 47]. Those with visible ethnic or racial markers were especially targeted, while participants in the USA mostly spoke of microaggression due to their limited language fluency and different accents.

The FGs also revealed how participants dealt with the unfairness and racism they encountered in their new society, by persevering to master English and acquiring the local accent or else by ignoring or accepting confronting incidents. Nonetheless, these experiences were likely to have entrenched and long-lasting impacts on participants' health and other settlement outcomes [e.g., 48, 49].

In this research, a higher proportion of participants in Australia identified as having a refugee background compared to the other two countries. Reticence may have been felt by participants from refugee backgrounds in the USA to identify as such, or even to participate in the study at all. In the survey, non-refugee migrant participants reported higher perceived discrimination than refugee participants in Australia and Canada while, in the USA, this trend was reversed. Having a higher sense of identity (both national and ethnic) played an important role in reducing the impact of discrimination^u; however, participants in the USA reported relatively lower identification with the national identity than was reported by participants in the other two countries. These findings were important as discrimination impacted participants' well-being in significant ways across all countries.^{uu}

Importantly, institutional support, such as through schools, and healthy family function both showed a massive impact on reducing discrimination in the USA, in particular^{vv}, indicating that opportunities are available to support well-being through inclusive and supportive educational practices, and by supporting families through services.

Family relationships

Family support was most important for participants settling into their new societies in South Australia, Ontario and California. The survey consistently highlighted relationships with healthy family function and well-being for participants. Furthermore, in answer to open-ended questions about how they coped with challenges, especially how they coped during the COVID-19 pandemic, many participants gave detailed evidence of the importance of their families during times of lockdowns and restricted movements. In the FGs, they readily acknowledged the material, financial, emotional and motivational support offered by parents and siblings. They were appreciative of the sacrifices made by parents to migrate leaving behind all that was familiar to them, to ensure a better future for their children. Sometimes parents and young people reciprocated their support to each other to ease the overall challenge of settlement. Several participants had also benefited from extended family support, from uncles, aunts and/or cousins who had migrated before them. However, they grieved for immediate and extended family members left behind in unsafe or hostile situations. Reminiscing about the separation from family members became emotionally overwhelming to a few participants during discussions.

Many participants experienced an acculturation gap with their parents as participants had been more exposed to a new society, culture and lifestyle, and had to adapt for survival, while parents were more grounded in the native culture and had difficulties accepting these changes [e.g., 50, 51, 52]. They described misunderstandings and miscommunications, and sometimes serious disagreements, with parents regarding lifestyle, relationships and dress code. Sometimes these differences were irreconcilable, but most of the time, participants were striving towards a compromise with their loved ones. Many participants were burdened by additional family responsibilities after migrating, largely because their parents were less proficient in English or not familiar with local systems. Sometimes participants striving to acculturate themselves and achieve their own expectations, were thrust into taking on a “parenting role” to their parents as well as to their younger siblings [e.g., 53]. How participants managed and coped with their added responsibilities is described in the next section.

Stress, coping and help seeking

Young participants engaged in hectic lifestyles involving studies, employment, and household and family responsibilities. A primary stressor identified related to excelling at school or university and meeting academic deadlines while still learning a new language. Most participants were eager to succeed, attend university, obtain suitable employment and take care of their families; however, uncertainty about the future was creating anxiety. Added family responsibilities was another major stressor for participants called upon to take on adult responsibilities, paying bills on time, doing household chores and mentoring younger siblings. Participants separated from their immediate family grieved for their loved ones and worried about their safety overseas.

It seems astonishing how participants were not only coping with their stress-filled lives, but also moving on despite these challenges. Towards the end of the FGs, participants afforded us a glimpse of their incredible journeys towards surviving, while striving and thriving after migration. Most participants utilised a variety of coping strategies and resources including spending time or “hanging out” with friends or, to a lesser extent, with family; engaging in sporting activities (walking, dancing, gym, playing sport); participating in religious and spiritual activities (meditation and prayer); and self-motivation. They also engaged in other hobbies (journalling, reading, music, art, movies) that distracted them from their daily grind [e.g., 54, 55].

Apart from religious/spiritual activities, little indication was given of a preference for cultural coping mechanisms. Participants were increasingly reaching out for support from professionals (psychologists, counsellors, psychiatrists), settlement agencies or school staff despite the cultural stigma surrounding mental ill-health and help seeking [e.g., 56, 57, 58].

Participants' expectations for education were generally high, as reported in the survey, and they were more likely to talk with parents, caregivers and other family members than with any other source about their education and employment goals. Similarly, participants were more likely to seek help from family members than from any other source for any emotional issues or challenges. However, the survey results also showed that overall help seeking behaviour had room for growth.

Parents and caregivers

Most parent/caregiver participants were grateful to be in their new society, for reasons of safety, freedom and educational opportunity for their children. The multicultural nature of society in the three research locations (South Australia, Ontario, California), as well as the support received during settlement, facilitated their sense of belonging. While most participants benefited from the help of family, friends or community members during initial stages of migration, those in Australia and Canada also acknowledged the support of settlement agencies and their government (e.g., cost-free education for children, health care, income support).

Limited English proficiency was a challenge to acculturation and a sense of belonging for most parent/caregiver participants as it prevented them from interacting with those outside their cultural communities and gaining meaningful employment. While most participants were determined to adapt to their new society and were seeking to belong, experiences of unfair treatment, racism and discrimination massively impacted these efforts. Nonetheless, all parent/caregiver participants were striving to cope with their stressors by utilising numerous coping strategies and resources, giving us some insights into how participants were conquering the myriad of challenges they encountered during settlement [e.g., 59, 60, 61].

Strengths and limitations of the research

This large project was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic. The successful completion of this international project reflects the strong commitment and keen engagement of project partner organisations. The flexible methods were important for engaging with young people and families, not only during the pandemic, but also in terms of attending to the varied needs and preferences of people from refugee and non-refugee migrant communities. The bilingual approach used to conduct the study was central to its success. Bilingual researchers provided connections to participants and communities as well as support for participants to understand the project concepts and scope, to provide informed consent and to participate. The project's success was due to the strong relationships between researchers in the university setting and in partner organisations, including bilingual researchers.

The research outcomes were limited in that the data were cross-sectional rather than longitudinal. However, based on these data, the outcomes provide an in-depth picture of the strengths of young people and their families and the challenges they face after migration. The study highlights some important similarities in experiences for young people and their families after migration, but also some contextual differences. The findings from the study indicate the potential for focused policy and practice to support young people and their families after migration, with some of the recommendations (outlined below) possibly transferrable to other countries and contexts.

One of the fundamental visible and invisible impacts on this study has been the radical changes in political climates within the study's time period. Although it appeared to be unforeseeable in the beginning, it must be included as a limitation based on our objective observation of the political climate changes. Specifically, more radical changes have occurred in the US political climate in comparison to that of the other two countries. Changes in governmental leadership can create drastic shifts in immigration policies, leading to a discrepancy between what refugee and non-refugee immigrants may be promised upon arrival in their settlement country and the reality of their settlement experiences. The policies and legislation regarding refugee and non-refugee immigrants that are developed by one administration may be dramatically changed by the next administration. This is an overall limitation for refugee and non-refugee immigrants when seeking to accomplish successful settlement in different countries.

In addition, the foundation of resiliency theory emphasises the capacity to adapt in the face of adversity. In our research context, it simply meant the socio-political structure of each country. No significant differences were found in resilience among refugee and non-refugee immigrants in all three countries, thus demonstrating that individual resilience is linked to the systemic issues of socio-political structures of each country as a context.

Our study highlights the project's aim of: "to identify contextual factors that young people and their families identify as relevant for settlement and psychological well-being". In looking at contextual factors, we identified the socio-political barriers to practising the principle of inclusion by design. Despite the resilience of young people and their families, they did not feel a strong sense of belonging in their communities. This was well reflected in the results that showed perceived discrimination and feeling excluded or experiencing racism in all three countries.

The notion of resilience is further evidence that individuals, with either refugee or non-refugee migrant backgrounds, must demonstrate the highest capacity to adapt in the face of society's adversity and challenges. The socio-political context of any society is subject to radical changes in government officials and political climate. These changes have direct impacts on policies and expectations, as well as on the support provided to refugee and non-refugee immigrants young people and their families. In this research, inconsistencies were found between what was promised based on the foundation of the humanistic law of the land and fluctuations in practices due to periodic changes of administration. Therefore, resilience is needed to compensate for social structure deficiencies. This is well reflected in our limitations section which shows that the resilience of individuals is directly related to the context of systemic issues and power structures of each country [19].

Resilience can be a sign of well-being in the individual with the capacity for adaptive thinking patterns in the face of adversity. However, if the problem or the adversity is about systemic issues that affect millions, this requires advocacy for socio-political change. Our study has successfully identified the need for change and, accordingly, this is a call to respond effectively to the recommendations for necessary and sustainable changes [19].

Summary of roundtable discussion

A roundtable discussion was held on 28 November 2024 via Zoom connecting 17 members of the Rebuilding Life After Migration (RLAM) Management Committee and invitees from the three partner countries. We were honoured to have the following special guest invitees join the discussion:

1. **Hon. Mira El Dannawi** – Member of Legislative Council, South Australian Parliament, Australia
2. **Enaam Oudih** – Practice Manager, Multicultural Engagement, Relationships Australia, Australia
3. **Jessica Kwik** – Director of the Peel Newcomer Strategy Group (PNSG), a local immigration partnership in Peel/Mississauga, Canada
4. **Danielle Ungara** – Manager, Child Welfare Immigration Centre of Excellence focusing on capacity building for children, young people and families, Canada
5. **Harold Takooshian, PhD** – Professor of Psychology. Officer of PCUN: Psychology Coalition of NGOs at the United Nations Having Consultative Status with ECOSOC

The following are some salient points from the roundtable discussion:

Towards a decolonising perspective for lasting change

- The colonial approach remains the “elephant in the room”, with a decolonising perspective required to bring about lasting and effective change for refugee and non-refugee background populations.
- Those with refugee and non-refugee backgrounds come with high resilience to overcome challenges, but systemic issues make it more difficult for them to overcome challenges. Instead of using that resilience to benefit the new communities, more barriers are created for them. Newcomers are often seen as a challenge and difficult to work with: these perceptions then negatively impact their employment opportunities. These issues are not being addressed with the wider community. This is the reason for the finding that the longer people are here, the more discriminated against they feel. One reason is that during the initial years, they are afforded support by people who understand. However, when this support ends, they are faced with reality. That is why we have been advocating for longer-term support which has now been accepted.
- The systematic change and policies need also to be about language. Currently, an “us” and “them” language, that is, “us” – Australians/Canadians/Americans vs. “them” – migrants and refugees, is apparent. This language is then used by their peers and at school, impacting people’s sense of belonging. We need a change of language to indicate that we are all part of the same society.

Belonging and acculturation

- The sense of belonging is not a one-way street. Countries and their citizens also need to contribute to that sense of belonging among refugee and non-refugee migrant background children and young people. Their intersectional identities and the identities they are forming are strongly connected to that sense of belonging.
- Although understanding the scope of the present research, should future research seek a much deeper meaning for acculturation and belonging? Multiple definitions are found of the word ‘identity’, that is, the identity we give ourselves and what others and society confer on us. For example, I work with children impacted by war. They speak perfect English but feel alienated from society. The identity they give themselves is very different from the identity given to them by the school and the community. This is causing many mental health issues, resentment and anger.

- How do we measure acculturation and how do we educate service providers about the importance of context? How do we introduce additional training on racism and discrimination? Although cultural festivals are important events for a community's engagement and intercultural dialogue to build social resilience towards a cohesive society, they should never replace anti-discrimination conversations.
- Resilience comes from a collective identity of feeling proud of who they are and their connection to their culture. It is important to emphasise the development of a bicultural identity.

Family resilience

- Many mainstream services are centred on clients or individuals. Policy change is needed to include the extended family support system. Services need to be more family centred. Addressing settlement needs of young people and their families within schools in Canada is an excellent strategy of building resilience.
- It is important to take into consideration the contextual factors impacting resilience and how families contribute to young people's resilience.
- It is important to support families to build resilience, taking into consideration the individual situation of each family as families may differ from one another.
- Community and neighbourhood bodies need to build family resilience.

Ancillary points

- Large multicultural festivals, such as the 2024 Multicultural Festival recently held in Adelaide, South Australia, with 11,000 participants, are important to bring people together and to highlight the commonalities over the differences among people.
- It is important to connect the state's responsibility under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. It is also important for both young people and parents to understand the rights of young people.
- It is important to hear from unaccompanied minors who are a specific group in our countries and to include them in future research.

Photo by NCP



Recommendations

Recommendations for policy development

- Increased funding to provide access to English language courses for young people and older family members that extends beyond initial arrival programs
- Increased, explicit, better developed and implemented public policy to support anti-racism and anti-discrimination practices at a society level, as well as specifically within workplaces, schools and teaching/learning institutions
- Streamlined processes to facilitate pathways to meaningful employment for adult migrants, including improved processes for gaining recognition of overseas qualifications
- Prioritisation of family reunion visas and associated processes to enable families to support one another during settlement and to reduce worry or grief for people left behind. This is particularly critical for families from refugee backgrounds where family members may face active and continuing danger and risk.
- Introduction of an immigration status regularisation program, allowing those living precariously, including asylum seekers or claimants, international students and others on temporary visas, to become permanent residents of their respective countries. Accordingly, considerable change in policy is needed to afford pathways to permanent residency based on humanitarian or compassionate grounds.
- Steps to be taken to ensure that people with refugee experiences residing in these countries become full participants in society and are empowered to lead lives of visibility and human dignity, towards leading more fulfilled lives.

Recommendations for practice

- Educational institutions could work with students with high expectations for university study to map out their pathways to and through tertiary study. Equally, educational institutions could identify and work with students with lower expectations to ensure they have the supports they need for well-being, reaching out to their families, if appropriate, (on a case-by-case basis) to ensure they are connected to relevant services.
- Service providers from multiple sectors could actively reach out to young people to offer help and support, as the help seeking behaviour of young people in this study was limited. This may include outreach for general social activities and events, as well as more directed outreach at an individual level to young people who may be hesitant to reach out themselves, may not know what to ask or who to approach for help when things are challenging.
- Provision of easily accessible, cost-free or income-tested mental health support through settlement agencies. Continuing health education programs and discussion forums are needed to raise awareness among young people and adults to reduce stigma around mental health, to highlight the importance of help seeking and to provide information on how to access available services.
- Provision of special programs for newly arrived migrant families including social events, peer support programs, and group and family therapy. These programs could be afforded through settlement agencies and could be offered to those to seek their services.
- Capacity building is important for migrant families, young people and their communities through the following practices:
 - Continuing awareness raising and community education to reduce stigma of those seeking help for mental health and other issues

- Providing ongoing practical settlement support to migrant families in need, to ease the burden on young people
- Developing family-centred approaches to help seeking as opposed to individual- or client-focused approaches in recognition of how families help build the resilience of young people
- Developing mental health and other supports available to young people within high schools and universities
- Systematic and long-term English language support for refugee and non-refugee migrant young people who need it to ease their stress and foster a sense of belonging

Recommendations for future research

- Longitudinal research is needed for a more comprehensive understanding of the experiences of refugee and non-refugee migrants over time, including identity development and belonging; progress in education and employment; and family dynamics. It is also important that these studies investigate the mental health challenges of young people and adults, as well as the patterns of help seeking, coping and resilience over time to obtain a more nuanced understanding of these phenomena and to provide more appropriate support for these populations.
- The issue of identity and the definition of people as having a refugee/non-refugee migrant background arose as challenges during this research. Future research could investigate how the label of refugee or non-refugee migrant fits with their own sense of identity, as well as how the context of racism or discrimination, or government policies regarding seeking asylum, impact the use of these terms.
- The present research was conducted with people from refugee and non-refugee migrant backgrounds who were also permanent residents of Australia, Canada and the United States (USA). The experiences of those with temporary migration status were outside the scope of this study. However, asylum seekers or claimants are rapidly increasing in number due to conflict and war in many parts of the world. Therefore, it is important that similar research studies are conducted specifically with asylum seekers/claimants, as well as other temporary residents and undocumented persons, to explore their experiences of living in the shadows of many countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).
- Also needed is a more in-depth and targeted investigation focusing on the help seeking behaviours of refugee and non-refugee migrant young people as well as other young people with a temporary migration status.

Appendix A: Survey measures

Acculturation and adaptation were assessed using several sections of the Mutual Intercultural Relations in Plural Societies (MIRIPS) questionnaire [62]. Questions asked focused on participants' perception of their own identity after migration, their thoughts on elements of their heritage culture and language and those of the new home society, and about experiences of discrimination or feelings of belonging. Open ended, check box and Likert-scale questions about the impact of COVID-19 were also asked.

Family functioning of participating young people was assessed using one 12 item scale, the General Functioning Scale of the McMaster Family Assessment Device (FAD) [63]. This Scale has been recommended for use as a standalone and brief measure of overall family functioning with excellent psychometric properties [64, 65]. Additional questions regarding family included questions around parent/ caregivers and siblings and how often participants spoke to family members about career plans or worries and personal stress. Throughout the survey, questions about the impact of COVID-19 and related coping strategies were asked. In many of these open-ended questions, participants highlighted the importance of family.

Emotional health and well-being were assessed using several scales as well as open ended question and single item checkboxes. Resilience was measured using the 10-item abridged version of the Conner-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC) [66], Strengths and difficulties by the 25-item Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) [67], Life Satisfaction using the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS; Diener et al., 1985), and Self Esteem using the Rosenberg 10-item scale [68]. One section of the survey contained questions about who participants talked to or sought help from in relation to emotional or behavioural problems. Open ended, check box and Likert-scale questions about the impact of COVID-19 were also asked.

Schooling experience was assessed utilising several items selected from the National Schools Opinion Survey (NSOS) [69], the Life in School Checklist assessing bullying at school [70], alongside questions on future educational and occupational/career plans and discussions. Experiences of young people from refugee and non-refugee migrant backgrounds engaged in some form of employment were ascertained using the Australian Workplace Barometer (AWB) [71]. Sections of the AWB included in the survey were: nature of employment; job demands – physical; job demands – emotional; organisational bullying; and organisational harassment. The survey also collected information about education and employment status and the impact of covid.

Regression analyses

Table A4: Multiple regression: dependent variable ‘perceived discrimination’

Note: #refugee=1, non-refugee migrant=2

Multiple regressions within country			Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients		Sig.	95% Confidence Interval for B	
	Adjusted R ²		B	Std. Error	Beta	t		Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Australia	R ² =.17, F(4,493) =26.27, p<.001	(Constant)	3.668	0.244		15.046	<.001	3.189	4.147
		Time in settlement	0.040	0.007	0.248	5.951	<.001	0.027	0.053
		Ethnic identity	-0.261	0.048	-0.231	-5.439	<.001	-0.355	-0.167
		National identity	-0.185	0.038	-0.206	-4.858	<.001	-0.260	-0.110
		Migration mode#	0.054	0.072	0.032	0.758	0.449	-0.086	0.195
Canada	R ² =.17, (4,268)=14.60, p<.001	(Constant)	3.042	0.304		10.006	<.001	2.444	3.641
		Time in settlement	0.045	0.013	0.198	3.504	0.001	0.020	0.071
		Ethnic identity	-0.321	0.058	-0.320	-5.562	<.001	-0.435	-0.207
		National identity	-0.052	0.048	-0.063	-1.085	0.279	-0.147	0.043
		Migration mode#	0.158	0.086	0.104	1.830	0.068	-0.012	0.329
USA	R ² =.25, F(4,230)=20.25 p<.001	(Constant)	5.132	0.354		14.483	<.001	4.434	5.830
		Time in settlement	0.025	0.010	0.162	2.664	0.008	0.007	0.044
		Ethnic identity	-0.369	0.062	-0.341	-5.916	<.001	-0.492	-0.246
		National identity	-0.263	0.054	-0.293	-4.834	<.001	-0.370	-0.156
		Migration mode#	-0.312	0.115	-0.155	-2.713	0.007	-0.538	-0.085

Table A5: Impact of discrimination on well-being (regression results)

Impact of discrimination on... (univariate regressions with constant)		Adjusted R ²	F	df	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval for B
Australia	Self esteem	.09	55.39	1,553	-.261	.035	-.302	-7.442	<.001	-.33, -.19
	Life satisfaction	.01	8.62	1,536	-.136	.046	-.126	-2.935	.003	-.23, -.05
	Total difficulties	.12	74.98	1,553	2.508	.29	.35	8.66	<.001	1.94, 3.08
Canada	Self esteem	.19	71.53	1,308	-.394	.047	-.434	-8.457	<.001	-.49, -.30
	Life satisfaction	.10	35.83	1,308	-.344	.057	-.323	-5.986	<.001	-.46, -.23
	Total difficulties	.14	50.88	1,303	2.92	.41	.38	7.13	<.001	2.11, 3.72
USA	Self esteem	.23	83.83	1,283	-.399	.044	-.478	-9.156	<.001	-.49, -.31
	Life satisfaction	.03	9.78	1,282	-.183	.058	-.183	-3.127	.002	-.30, -.07
	Total difficulties	.21	74.58	1,281	3.58	.42	.46	8.64	<.001	2.77, 4.40

Appendix B: Project brochure

For more information about the study, please contact:

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An international research partnership between Australia, Canada and the USA


University of South Australia


Centre for Workplace Excellence


UniSA Justice & Society


THE UNIVERSITY of ADELAIDE


UTS UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY SYDNEY


AMRC Australian Migrant Resource Centre


MYSA MULTICULTURAL YOUTH SOUTH AUSTRALIA


nccp National Council for Community and Partnership


IMCES INSTITUTE FOR MULTICULTURAL COUNSELING AND EDUCATION SERVICES

Re-building Life After Migration

Settlement Experiences of Refugee and Migrant Youth



This research study is funded by the Australian Research Council (ARC) (E.P190100740).
Photos sourced from AMRC, MYSA, NCP, and IMCES.
Designed by We're Open

Why conduct this study?

Young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds have enormous potential to contribute to their multicultural society. However, they face unique challenges before and after migration that may place them at increased risk for settlement and psychosocial problems. It is important that support services are available to promote their successful settlement, health and wellbeing to enable them to reach their potential. Improving their settlement experiences and access to services is important for both the individuals concerned and the broader community as young people's participation in society directly affects their social, cultural and economic contribution to their multicultural society.

The study will explore settlement experiences among young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds aged between 15 and 24 years



What is the study about?

This new study will give us a deeper understanding of the experiences of refugee and migrant background youth settling into their multicultural society and the contextual factors that youth and their families identify as relevant for successful settlement and wellbeing. The study will also identify the effectiveness of support services currently available to youth and their families and how we can impact policymakers and service providers to better help refugee and migrant background young people and their families.

Who will conduct the study?

A group of researchers from the University of South Australia in partnership with the University of Adelaide, University of Technology Sydney, Australian Migrant Resource Centre (AMRC), Multicultural Youth South Australia (MYSA) and two international organisations—Newcomer Center of Peel (NCP, Canada) and Institute of Multicultural Counseling and Education Services (IMCES, USA) will be conducting this large study in three project sites, in Australia, Canada and the USA.

Who will take part in the study?

Young people aged between 15 and 24 years from the Middle East (e.g. Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Syria), South Asia (e.g. Nepal, Bhutan, Myanmar/Burma, Pakistan) and Africa (e.g. DR Congo, Ethiopia, Liberia, Somalia, South Sudan and Sudan) as well as from China, India and elsewhere who have migrated, or whose parents had migrated, to Australia/Canada/the USA within the past 15 years will be invited to participate in the study.

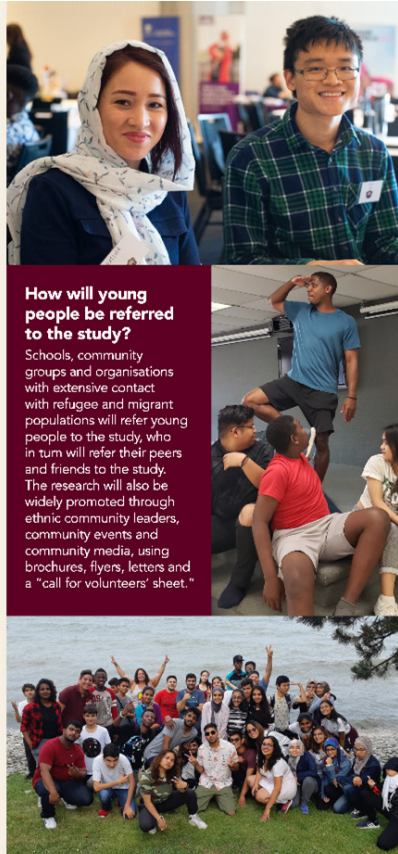
Young people will be offered \$20 worth of in-kind incentives for their time.

Participants will have access to a summary of research findings.

1200 young people aged 15 to 24 years, residing in Australia, Canada and the USA will be participating in the study.

How will young people be referred to the study?

Schools, community groups and organisations with extensive contact with refugee and migrant populations will refer young people to the study, who in turn will refer their peers and friends to the study. The research will also be widely promoted through ethnic community leaders, community events and community media, using brochures, flyers, letters and a "call for volunteers" sheet."



Photos by AMRC, MYSA, and NCP



Photos by AMRC, MYSA, and NCP



Photos by AMRC, MYSA, and NCP



Photos by AMRC, MYSA, and NCP



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Endnotes

^a Note that although we use Australian spelling generally, we keep the American spelling for IMCES.

^b The study was conducted across three countries with differing norms around spelling of particular words. Please note that throughout the report we consistently use Australian English for clarity of expression, but not because of any value judgements about particular English language norms.

^c See appendices.

^d See appendices for more information on the scales.

^e Independent T tests showed significant difference for: 'I think of myself as someone from a refugee background': Refugee group $M=3.27$, $SD=1.42$, $n=608$. Migrant group $M=1.43$, $SD=.92$, $n=555$. $t(1051)=26.43$, $p<.001$, Cohen's $d=1.523$.

'I think of myself as someone from an immigrant background': Refugee group $M=3.23$, $SD=1.41$, $n=607$ compared to Migrant group $M=3.46$, $SD=1.35$, $n=557$. $t(1162)=-2.84$, $p=.005$. Cohen's $d=-.167$.

^f T test showed no significant differences.

^g Comparing between the three countries (ANOVA): Levene's statistic significant for ethnic identity in both refugee ($=.003$) and migrant ($=.012$) groups, Welch test significant only for refugee group ($<.001$) with $\eta^2=.028$. Levene's not significant for national identity in either group and ANOVAs showed statistical significance: Refugee: $F(2,609)=8.80$, $p<.001$ with $\eta^2=.028$, Migrant: $F(2,557)=10.09$, $p<.001$ with $\eta^2=.035$.

^h Games Howell post hoc test showed significant results only for USA compared to both Canada and Australia ($p<.001$ in all refugee and non-refugee migrant groups across the three countries). Non-significant results for Canada:Australia.

ⁱ Games Howell post hoc showed Australia:Canada $p=.002$ and Australia:USA $p=.025$ significant difference for refugee background participants. Non-significant results for the refugee group in USA:Canada $p=.996$. Non-significant differences in ethnic identity for all non-refugee migrant participants across three countries.

^j See appendices for information about the scale. ANOVA comparing three countries for Mean total perceptions of discrimination: Levene's test significant $=.027$, Welch test significant $<.001$. Games-Howell post hoc showed significant differences between all three countries ranging from $.019$ to $<.001$.

^k Discrimination scale (Range 1-5): Canada $M=1.99$, $SD=.81$ ($n=320$), Australia $M=2.15$, $SD=.79$ ($n=562$), USA $M=2.42$, $SD=.90$ ($n=301$)

^l Independent t test within country (2 tailed sig): Canada Refugee group $M=1.92$, $SD=.84$, $n=160$ compared to Migrant group $M=2.08$, $SD=.78$, $n=154$. $t(312)=-1.741$, $p=.083$. Cohen's $d=-.197$. Australia: Refugee group $M=2.09$, $SD=.79$, $n=385$ compared to Migrant group $M=2.27$, $SD=.79$, $n=171$. $t(554)=-2.402$, $p=.017$. Cohen's $d=-.221$. USA: Refugee group $M=2.69$, $SD=.99$, $n=66$ compared to Migrant group $M=2.35$, $SD=.85$, $n=235$. $t(299)=2.8815$, $p=.005$. Cohen's $d=.392$.

^m ANOVAs showed no significant results.

ⁿ See Table 5, appendices.

^o Pearson correlations: Resilience $r=.254^{**}$ $n=1057$, Life Satisfaction $r=.277^{**}$ $n=1039$, Self Esteem $r=.326^{**}$ $n=1056$, Total difficulties $r=-.391^{**}$, $n=1057$ (** sig. $<.001$, 2-tailed)

^p T test results using all country data - Life Satisfaction: Healthy function $M=3.98$, $SD=.68$, $n=474$ compared to unhealthy function $M=3.52$, $SD=.65$, $n=582$. $t(1037)=8.057$, $p<.001$. Cohen's $d=.503$. Resilience: Healthy function $M=2.82$, $SD=.69$, $n=474$ compared to unhealthy function $M=2.43$, $SD=.73$, $n=583$. $t(1055)=8.87$, $p<.001$. Cohen's $d=.549$. Self Esteem: Healthy function $M=3.98$, $SD=.68$, $n=474$ compared to unhealthy function $M=3.52$, $SD=.65$, $n=582$. $t(1054)=11.28$, $p<.001$. Cohen's $d=.698$. Total difficulties: Healthy function $M=10.32$, $SD=5.19$, $n=474$ compared to unhealthy function $M=14.32$, $SD=6.18$, $n=583$. $t(1054)=-11.44$, $p<.001$. Cohen's $d=-.695$

^q Pearson correlation between Bullying and SDQ Total Difficulties = $.338$, $p<.001$, 2 tailed, $n=402$.

^r Pearson correlation between Bullying and Expectations of education = $-.208$, $p<.001$, $n=361$.

^s Institutional support scale: Range=1-4, $M=3.33$ $SD=.55$, $n=901$.

^t ANOVAs showed non-significant results for both scales according to country of data collection

^u T test using all country data: Refugee $M=3.97$, $SD=1.65$, $n=540$ compared to migrant $M=4.73$, $SD=1.45$, $n=482$. $t(1020)=-7.911$, $p<.001$ ('I don't know' or missing data excluded from analysis)

^v T test using individual country data: USA non-significant result: Refugee $M=4.77$ $SD=1.18$, $n=64$, compared to Migrant $M=4.83$ $SD=1.38$, $n=208$. Canada: Refugee $M=3.84$, $SD=1.61$, $n=137$ compared to migrant $M=4.47$, $SD=1.59$, $n=130$. $t(265)=-3.22$, $p<.001$. Australia: Refugee $M=3.87$, $SD=1.70$, $n=339$ compared to migrant $M=4.83$, $SD=1.39$, $n=144$. $t(481)=-6.01$, $p<.001$ ('I don't know' or missing data excluded from analysis).

^w ANOVA comparing the three countries regarding education expectations showed significant differences between USA's results and the other two countries, but no significant difference between Canada and Australia. Games-Howell post hoc comparison used; nonhomogeneous variances (Levene's statistic significant, $<.001$).

^x Using linear regressions within each country for refugee and non-refugee groups, caregiver men and women impacted young people's expectations for education. Higher education of caregivers was linked to higher expectations for education of participating young people. The largest influence was caregiver men's level of education on non-refugee migrant young people's expectations.

^y T tests conducted in pairs. Results were significant but Cohen's *d* was below .3 for all.

^z T test using all country data: Working age *M*=20.87, *SD*=2.75, *n*=298; Not working age *M*=18.96 *SD*=2.93, *n*=792. *t*(567)=10.03, *p*<.001. Cohen's *d*=.661

^{aa} NOTE: figure of 26% differs from previously mentioned 27% of employed participants due to missing data on education status. In total 27% of all participants were employed, with 1% within that group not reporting education status.

^{bb} ANOVA showed no significant differences for any groups using all country data

^{cc} Pearson correlation Bullying with Harassment *r*=.481 (*p*<.001 2-tailed)

^{dd} Pearson correlation Ethnic Identity with Bullying *r*=-.304** and with Harassment *r*=-.245** (***p*<.001 2-tailed)

^{ee} See appendices.

^{ff} No values are given here, as these mean figures are intended for a general comparison across countries and between refugee and non-refugee migrant groups in this study. Values between scales are not standardised.

^{gg} t tests comparing refugee/non-refugee migrant young people's total difficulties in the USA: *d*=.503, a medium effect.

^{hh} ANOVA comparing countries within refugee/migrant groups separately. Levene's significant for Total difficulties migrant group<.001, Welch's non-significant *p*=.241. Only significant difference was between countries for refugee group, total difficulties: *F*(2,601) 8.60 = , *p*<.001

ⁱⁱ Relatively small effect sizes: T tests for refugee/migrant within each country showed *p*>.05 for all [Life satisfaction, self-esteem, resilience] in Canada and USA, >.05 for life satisfaction in Australia, but for Self-esteem in Australia Refugee *M*=3.79, *SD*=.69, *n*=383; Migrant *M*=3.61 *SD*=.63, *n*=171. *t*(552)=2.95, *p*=.003 (two sided). Cohen's *d*=.271 and for Resilience in Australia Refugee *M*=2.60, *SD*=.70, *n*=384; Migrant *M*=2.73 *SD*=.69, *n*=164, *t*(552)=-2.05, *p*=.040 (two sided). Cohen's *d*=-.189.

^{jj} ANOVA comparing countries & refugee/migrant groups separately. Significant difference between countries for migrant group resilience only: *F*(2,555)=2.34 , *p*=.013, Games-Howell post hoc test showed Canada and Australia significantly different *p*=.010: Australia *M*=2.74, *SD*=.69, Canada *M*=2.50, *SD*.77, and no differences for USA/Canada or USA/Australia.

^{kk} ANOVA comparing the three countries, all data, *p*>.05 for all three variables.

^{ll} See Table 5, appendices

^{mmm} See Table A4, appendices.

ⁿⁿ In multiple regression reported in Table A4 (appendices), institutional support was introduced as an independent variable. In all three countries this variable became a significant predictor (*p*<.001).

^{oo} Previous *R*² for the USA in Table 4 (appendices) was .25 and with the inclusion of school support the value rose to *R*²=.42 (*F*(5,119)=18.62, *p*<.011, school support *Beta*=-.560, *t*(119)=-7.51, *p*<.001. In this multiple regression, significance of other factors listed became insignificant (*p*=.388 for Time in settlement, *p*=.179 for ethnic identity, *p*=.148 for refugee/migrant background).

^{pp} For this factor only in the multiple regression *Beta*=-.124, *t*(452)=-2.77, *p*=.006 in Australia, *Beta*=-.243, *t*(252)=-3.99, *p*<.001 in Canada and *Beta*=-.218, *t*(184)=-3.02, *p*=.003 in the USA. All other factors retained significance or non-significance although slight alterations were observed in the exact figures.

^{qq} Univariate regression total difficulties on education expectations: Australia *Beta*=-.087, *t*(539)=-2.02, *p*=.043, USA *Beta*=.159, *t*(297)=2.77, *p*=.006. However, when split by refugee/migrant background, only refugee group significant within Australia *Beta*=-.103, *t*(366)=-1.99, *p*=.047, and migrant group within USA *Beta*=.197, *t*(231)=3.06, *p*=.002.

^{rr} See Table A5, appendices.

^{ss} Note, some participants did not answer certain questions and so percentages may not add up to 100% due to missing data.

^{tt} See Table 2, appendices.

^{uu} See Table 3, appendices.

^{vv} See section 'Well-being' in the survey findings.

