

Volunteering and Connection to the Australian Community: Survey Findings

AMES Vision

Full participation for all in a cohesive and diverse society

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the first language research assistants, AMES teachers and the AMEP students who completed the survey.

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Executive Summary

Australia has a long history of migration and a highly diverse population. ABS data shows that at 30 June 2014, 28.1% of the population was born overseas (ABS, 2015). Australia's current immigration policy includes a strong focus on bringing skilled migrants to Australia to fill gaps in the labour market and to counteract the effects of an ageing population.

Migrant and refugee settlement is critical to Australia's future prosperity and an investment in the future of our nation's economy and its social capital. Both the host society and new migrants need to work together to bring about social cohesion. Participation is a reciprocal endeavour where members of the more established Australian community are an integral part of the process to ensure that new arrivals are not socially isolated and marginalised. Without help and support new migrants may find it difficult to meet other people, build their social capital and become fully functioning integrated members of the community (Jackson et al, 2012).

Given the importance of social connection to successful settlement, the aim of this report is to gain an understanding of the extent of social connectedness and volunteering among new arrivals in Australia. This report is based on a survey that was administered to 386 students undertaking the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) at AMES Australia. This was a group of very new arrivals with over half having been here for less than a year.

The survey results are supported by an extensive literature review that describes the importance of social connection as a form of social capital that not only helps new migrants settle but also benefits the broader community. Volunteering is an important way for new migrants to participate in the community, meet new people and develop new skills. Volunteering is also a way for members of the broader community to meet and interact with new arrivals. This survey explores the prevalence of volunteering in terms of both giving and receiving.

The survey was given to AMEP students located at three AMES sites, St Albans, Noble Park and Flagstaff in April 2015. The survey was administered in English and the five most common languages of students at these sites - Chinese, Arabic, Vietnamese, Hakka Chin and Dari.

Findings are outlined in three sections.

1. Demographics
2. Meeting new people
3. Participation and volunteering

The findings indicate that social connection through community activities and volunteering are important to newly arrived migrants during the first few months and early years of settlement. Almost three quarters of respondents (72%) had been living in Australia for less than two years. During that time they had made significant inroads into forging social connection within their own and the broader community. The results show that new migrants had met people outside their own immediate family and networks; just under two thirds knew their neighbours and nine out of ten felt that volunteering was an important way to meet people and feel part of the community.

A summary of the survey findings are as follows.

Findings

Profile of survey participants

- 47% of respondents completed the survey in languages other than English.
- 86% of respondents were from lower level English classes (49% CSWE I / 37% CSWE II¹).
- More than half (52%) the respondents were aged 25 to 44 years.
- Two-thirds (68%) of respondents came to Australia on a Migrant visa (including family, spouse, skilled and business).
- Just over half (54%) the sample had been in Australia for less than 12 months. A further 39% had been in Australia between 1 to 5 years.
- 28% of respondents had already worked in Australia and almost two thirds (61%) were living in a household where at least one person was in paid employment.
- Respondents came from a range of countries: for example, 26% from North East Asia (China, Hong Kong, Tibet, Taiwan), 18 % from South East Asia (Myanmar, Cambodia, Thailand, Vietnam, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines), 9% from the Middle East (Iran, Iraq, Turkey, Syria) and 7% from Central Asia (Afghanistan). Smaller numbers came from Southern & East Africa (Ethiopia, Eritrea, Somalia) and Southern Asia (India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka).
- Almost two- thirds (63%) were women, also reflecting the AMEP cohort.

Meeting new people

- 94% of respondents had met other people outside their immediate family and their own community since arriving in Australia.
- Common places to meet people were at the AMEP class (98%), at the local shops (61%). and at a religious meeting place such as a church, mosque or a temple (54%).
- Having a job and children's activities were cited as very important ways to meet people by 65% and 62% of respondents respectively.
- Almost half (42%) think it is easy or very easy to make friends outside the family.

Feeling part of the community

- 91% of respondents said that "Making friends outside the family" was the single most important thing that helped new arrivals feel part of the Australian community.
- Other things that helped people feel part of the Australian community were chatting to neighbours, working, attending arts/cultural festivals and playing sport.
- Most (61%) knew their neighbours and 75% said they could get help from their neighbours if needed. (Two-thirds had been in their current home for less than 12 months).
- Three-quarters (76%) think that it takes up to a year to make friends / connections in the broader community.
- Just under half (46%) of respondents who had been in Australia for less than 12 months tended to be *mainly* in contact with people who speak the same language.

¹ The Certificate in Spoken and Written English (CSWE) is the national curriculum framework for the Adult Migrant Program. CSWE I and II are beginner and post beginner level respectively.

- Eight out of ten respondents use social media to contact people.

Participation and volunteering

- 23% of respondents are involved in local groups and clubs.
- 52% of respondents had provided help to other new migrants as a volunteer.
- 44% of respondents had helped out at their children's school.
- 76% had received help learning English from a volunteer.
- 89% thought volunteering was a very important (57%) / important (32%) way to meet people and feel part of the community.

Aim

AMES undertakes surveys to seek the opinions and experiences of relatively recent arrivals with low levels of English. This is a group that is rarely surveyed through mainstream opinion polling or via population level data collection methods. Most surveys tend to be done in English, with only a small proportion available in languages other than English.

The aim of this survey was to gain an understanding of the ways in which new and recently arrived migrants and refugees with low levels of English meet other people in the broader community during early settlement. It endeavoured to find out about how, where and in what time frames new arrivals meet others outside their immediate family or community, make social connections and participate in the wider community. The survey also explored the involvement of new and recent arrivals in volunteering, local clubs and groups.

Background / Settlement Context

Migrants and refugees arrive in Australia into a range of family and social circumstances. Some arrive into large, extended families and well-established cultural communities; others are part of newer, emerging communities. A significant number may have few family members or know no one outside their immediate family. This might mean that they lack some of the necessary support and knowledge required to settle in Australia.

On arrival, all new migrants have immediate tasks to undertake such as getting oriented to their local neighbourhood, enrolling children in schools, registering for services such as health, seeking and securing long-term accommodation. For many finding employment or starting a business is a priority, while for others, pursuing education and learning English are the tasks at hand. People need to quickly develop a basic understanding of Australian norms and laws underpinning all these activities and interactions.

As well as the practical tasks of settlement there is an expectation and desire among newly arrived migrants that they will become connected to, and participants in, the broader Australian community as quickly as possible. This expectation is shared by the broader Australian community. It therefore follows that social connection and cohesion is a shared endeavour for migrants and the general community.

Settlement Support Services

Australia's National Settlement Framework conceptualises Settlement as a 'period of adjustment as migrants become established, integrated and independent in their new community. Individuals

achieve successful settlement outcomes when they are able to fully participate and contribute to Australian society, and experience genuine social, civic economic and cultural inclusion².

Access to support and assistance has an impact on settlement and how quickly people are able to gain independence in their new life. An individual's ability to speak and understand English will also affect their capacity to understand large amounts of new information and make connections with the broader Australian community. Whilst a percentage of new arrivals have some settlement assistance provided by government, many rely initially on the support provided by their family and immediate cultural community.

Australia's current settlement services comprise a range of programs and services including English language tuition for people with low levels of English (provided through the Adult Migrant English Program - AMEP) and initial assistance with information and orientation, accommodation and referral to essential services (provided through Humanitarian Settlement Services - HSS). Whilst English language tuition is available to eligible new arrivals under the Humanitarian, Family and Skilled migration programs, Humanitarian Settlement Services are only available to Humanitarian entrants.

The aim of settlement services provided by the Australian government is to assist new migrants by providing them with the necessary tools and information to participate as soon and as fully as possible in Australia's economy and society.

Importance of social connection and social capital

The following literature review provides a context in which to understand the importance of social connection and volunteering for all members of the community.

Being socially connected is a key success factor in settlement. Making connections into the community is important to the health and wellbeing of migrants, as it is for other people in the broader community.

The aim of the survey was to ascertain the extent to which new migrants are socially connected within their own community and the extent to which they interact and associate with the broader society relatively early in settlement. As volunteering is an important mechanism to facilitate social connection, the survey included questions to gauge the level of volunteer participation among AMEP clients who are newly arrived in Australia.

Social capital

The term 'social capital' is widely used to describe the quality of social relations that all people forge within society (Ziersch et al, 2005). Research indicates that communities with strong social capital are more cohesive and engender social, civic and economic wellbeing. According to Stone et al (2003) social networks can be categorised into three types. The first type of social network is informal and includes relationships with members of the household, extended family, neighbours and work colleagues. The type of questions used in the survey to gauge informal networks were around places where people meet, knowing neighbours and seeking help from neighbours, and maintaining contact with personal networks using social media.

The second type of social network is community focused and relates to general and social relationships that are largely community based. Interactions are with people who are usually not known to individuals personally. The survey asked a series of questions about the types of activities

² The National Settlement Framework was produced under the auspices of the Select Council on Immigration and Settlement (SCIS) 2012

http://www.lga.sa.gov.au/webdata/resources/files/SCISDraftNationalSettlementFramework_Version_6_of_20_Septe.pdf

that make people feel part of the community, the importance of a job as a way to meet people, being involved in children's activities, the number of contacts people have outside their language group, their intention to join local community groups and clubs in the next 12 months and whether they volunteer.

The third type of social networks are institutional in nature and include the legal system, media, government bodies, non-government organisations, schools, medical institutions and corporations (Stone et al, 2003). There were no questions to ascertain respondent's links and connections to institutional networks.

Putnam (2000) describes the way in which social capital can be reproduced in everyday life through bonding and bridging. Bonding social capital involves collaboration and reciprocity within informal networks while bridging social capital involves the way in which networks in community and institutional settings are forged and overlap. The latter process denotes the way in which individuals and groups can gain access to the resources, power and networks from a range of other groups. Knowledge and resources refers to who, when and where to go for advice (network, skills and information) as well as how to get things done (procedures, rules, appropriate methods of communication) (Jackson, et al 2012). Yan and Lauer (2008) note, that it is not unusual for new migrants to have good bonding capital, while their bridging capital tends to be limited and largely confined to their own ethno-cultural community.

Importance of social capital to new migrants

In the context of newly arrived migrants, the value of social networks cannot be underestimated because they provide support and opportunities for new arrivals who may be experiencing exclusion from different social groups and settings either through a lack of knowledge, opportunity or access (Cederberg, 2012).

Jackson et al (2012) describe a number of scenarios where bonding and bridging capital provide both emotional support and encouragement to new migrants as they establish a new life in Australia. Migrants need a sense of belonging and connection to their own community where they can create solidarity, sharing, reciprocity and trust. But they also need to move outside their own community, friendship and family circles into the broader community. This is where bridging capital is important because successful settlement is dependent on being able to meet and interact with people and services, such as schools, English language classes and places of worship; seek employment and become involved in shared community activities such as sport, arts and culture. Connection with the wider Australian community means that migrants gain access to knowledge about Australian services and systems, resources and networks within the mainstream, as well as norms, values and cultural practices (Fozdar & Hartley, 2013).

Hugo (2011) highlights that existing migrant communities are critical in providing support networks to new arrivals and offering an invaluable source of knowledge about the way things work. Many new migrants live in spatially concentrated areas that are close to services and where affordable housing is available. This results in strong social connections within their own neighbourhood networks. The authors found that migrants from humanitarian backgrounds participated in community activities such as local events, play groups, religious services, school events, attending local parks and the library (Hugo, 2011). Findings such as this indicate that new migrants tend to gravitate to communities where existing support networks are already established. In this context the idea of social capital explains the way in which pathways and bonding are forged to help migrants establish strong networks in their neighbourhoods and to contribute to the communities in which they live.

Abbott & Freeth (2008) posit that trust and reciprocity are core components of social capital and are used to build social networks. Essentially, the two are inextricably bound: social networks do not

function without reciprocity and participation does not happen without trust. The term reciprocity can be conceptually viewed as an investment system where people contribute in any way they can to the ongoing development and maintenance of social networks. For some people there is an element of indebtedness linked to reciprocity. For example, when new migrants arrive in Australia they may receive help and assistance from a range of people including those from within their own community and ethnic networks. At a later time they may choose to repay the kindness of others by providing support and learning to people who are newly arrived.

The concept of reciprocity can be complex and difficult to measure using survey questions. While surveys can provide an indication of the type of interactions and exchanges people are engaged in via networks, activities, volunteering and so on it can be difficult to ascertain the motivations and levels of engagement relating to these actions in terms of mutual benefit for the giver and receiver (Abbott & Freeth, 2008).

Critics of the bonding and bridging dichotomy argue that this approach is simplistic and reductionist. Yet, they concede that these two concepts do help to differentiate the way in which social networks form the building blocks for social capital (Cederberg, 2012).

Levels of social connection among migrants

In a survey commissioned by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship on settlement outcomes of new arrivals (DIAC, 2011), participants were asked about their connectedness to the community both before and after arrival, including how many close friends or family they had in Australia before arrival. Information collected was analysed by visa stream. Skilled migrants were the group most likely to have no connections in Australia before arrival with just under half (45%) not having any family or close friends. In contrast, those coming under the Family stream were more likely to have close friends and family with 59% and 52% of Humanitarian migrants knowing between 1 to 10 people pre-arrival.

After arrival, the DIAC survey data indicates there is a small level of difference between the visa streams in terms of how well connected or linked they are to their community. Fifty four per cent from the Family stream, 53% Humanitarian and 50% Skilled stream stated that they were “well connected” (DIAC 2011).

The survey asked respondents to identify the types of community activities they had been involved in over the past 12 months. This information was then analysed by migration stream. For all streams meeting with family and friends was the most popular activity among both Family and Skilled migrants (80% both streams respectively) and 75% from the Humanitarian stream identifying this activity. For humanitarian migrants, religious groups (61%) and cultural groups (46%) were popular. Among skilled migrants religious groups (31%), sporting club/group (31%) and school where children attend (27%) were the most frequently identified activities. The top three activities for family migrants were religious group (28%) hobby group (23%) and cultural group (22%) (DIAC, 2011).

Respondents were asked to rate the friendliness of their neighbours. This data was analysed by how they had been treated by their local community since coming to Australia. Not surprisingly, new migrants who had been treated well by their local community were more likely to say that they were happy with the friendliness of their neighbours (67%) when compared to those who were not had not been treated well by the community (41%) (DIAC, 2011).

Yan and Lauer (2008) argue that social connection is a two way process that involves an equal partnership between the receiving community and new migrants. In this context, successful social connection requires bridging between new migrants and the broader community with the view to strengthen the community’s social capital and enhancing mutual support, co-operation, trust and settlement.

The AMES Australia survey builds upon the findings from other population level surveys. Although the numbers included in this survey are significantly smaller, the findings nevertheless provide an interesting insight into how migrants who have been in Australia for a relatively short period of time (54% less than one year and 72% less than two years) become socially connected and involved in volunteer activities.

The internet, social media and social connection

There is very little research to date that looks at the use of the internet and social media and the way in which it helps new migrants establish social networks. Mikal (2015) undertook research on use of social media by refugees. He was interested in how new arrivals use the internet when they have a limited understanding of the language and new environment in their arrival country. This was a qualitative study based on focus groups with refugees from Iraq and Sudan in the United States. The findings indicate that the internet allowed the refugees in this study to remain connected to friends and families in their country of origin. In the context of separation from family, loss of social support and social capital, accessing the internet provided them with a degree of agency because there were able to independently seek out assistance and overcome communication barriers.

Irish researchers Komito and Bates (2011) conducted a study on the use of social media among Polish and Filipino migrants. They found that both groups actively used social media to arrange social events with friends and family who were living in dispersed locations across urban areas. The authors conclude that social media allowed these migrants to maintain their social capital within their ethnic groups and networks.

Dekker and Engbersen (2014) studied the use of social media and networks in the Netherlands. They provide a comprehensive overview of the way in which new migrants use the internet and social media to strengthen ties and build bonding and bridging capital. The authors argue that social media is an important tool to maintain both strong and weak ties in migrant networks. Social media allows people to interact and reconnect with old friends, but also to forge new networks and relationships. Access to the internet and being connected via social media means that migrants are able to learn about the labour market, legal conditions and other practical settlement issues concerning life in their new country. The authors believe that social media is an important tool that can be used by migrants to not only maintain ties with friends, relatives and networks abroad, but it has the capacity to activate networks to allow unacquainted individuals to connect.

The Scanlon report on Mapping Social Cohesion (Markus, 2013) found that among those surveyed, social media was used by 80% of respondents as a way of contacting and being in touch with people. The survey also found that almost seven out of ten (69%) of the more recent arrivals (2000-2010) are in contact with their overseas relatives or friends 'every day' or 'several times a week', while of those who arrived in the 1990s the proportion is close to half (46%). The most popular form of maintaining contact is through social media, such as Facebook, although Skype and other internet based communication, mobile phones, and email are frequently used.

Volunteering

A high level of social connection is a predictor of wellbeing within communities. Volunteering is one way that new migrants improve personal, family, and community connections as well as build self-confidence. There are a number of reasons why people may choose to volunteer: firstly, contributing to one's community, secondly the opportunity to use and share skills and experiences and thirdly, supporting a cause that is important. Other motivations include networking, meeting people, improving job opportunities and satisfying religious beliefs and/or obligations (Guo, 2014).

Volunteer work, can be motivated by a sense of altruism, wanting to help others and pass on first-hand experience in relation to settlement. But it can also be motivated by a two-way reciprocal process where the volunteer receives as much as they give. This is true of all people, including

migrants. As an example, in the settlement context many migrants actively seek volunteer work to improve their employment prospects in Australia. Their volunteer contribution means that the organisation and/or clients receive invaluable support and assistance, and in return, the migrant gains skills, work experience, access to new networks and a local reference to assist with job searching. The lines between altruism, self-interest and indebtedness in this instance may not be clear cut even though there is an implicit level of reciprocity involved (Abbot & Freeth, 2008).

Unemployment and underemployment are significant problems for many new migrants (Guo, 2014). Volunteering can provide a pathway to assist migrants access the labour market by providing local experience as well as a reference (Fozdar & Hartley, 2013). Findings from a study conducted by AMES Australia found that volunteer work was actively sought by migrants. It was seen as a proxy to local work experience. By volunteering the participants in this study were able to learn about Australian workplace culture, improve their English and learn new skills (AMES Australia, 2015).

Schools and workplaces are also important sites for social connection and provide important informal support beyond the immediate family. Religious groups and meeting places are commonly cited by new migrants as places to participate in social and volunteering activities³.

A study by Sinha et al (2011) conducted among migrant ethnic congregations in the USA looked at the association between bonding and bridging capital and volunteering. The authors note that although religious congregations among particular ethnic groups tend to be homogenous and offer a place for newcomers to escape the challenges of settlement and acculturation, they provide the opportunity for parishioners to develop networks in a culturally similar community. For many the temptation is to confine their volunteer activities in a comfortable and inclusive setting offered by their religious congregation. However, confining their participation and experience to within their own cultural groups meant that they may be excluded from developing their social and bridging capital in the broader community. Volunteering in this context has the capacity to build trust and confidence so that people feel that they have the necessary skills to extend their involvement to the wider community. The authors argue that one of the key influences for civic participation among migrants is not only the preparedness of migrants to enter mainstream community clubs, organisations and activities but the extent to which they may be accepted by members of the host society.

Hugo (2011) argues that volunteers from CALD backgrounds make a significant contribution to the Australian community and to the development of their own communities and the maintenance of their cultural identity. However, much of the volunteer work they perform tends to be difficult to quantify and largely goes unnoticed due to the informal nature of this work. The types of informal assistance provided include transport, housing, childcare, aged care, service referral and translation.

Volunteering provides a “powerful source of informal learning”. There are a number of primary motivators to undertake volunteer work in the context of seeking employment. Migrants who volunteer not only gain new skills, they can also build their confidence, feel more empowered, develop relationships and networks as well as learning about organisational functioning and culture (Guo, 2014).

Volunteering offers a diverse range of activities that deliver significant economic and social benefits to the community (Hugo, 2011). In 2010 according to ABS data volunteering reached its peak with 36% of the adult population in Australia involved⁴. In 2014 the rate declined for the first time since

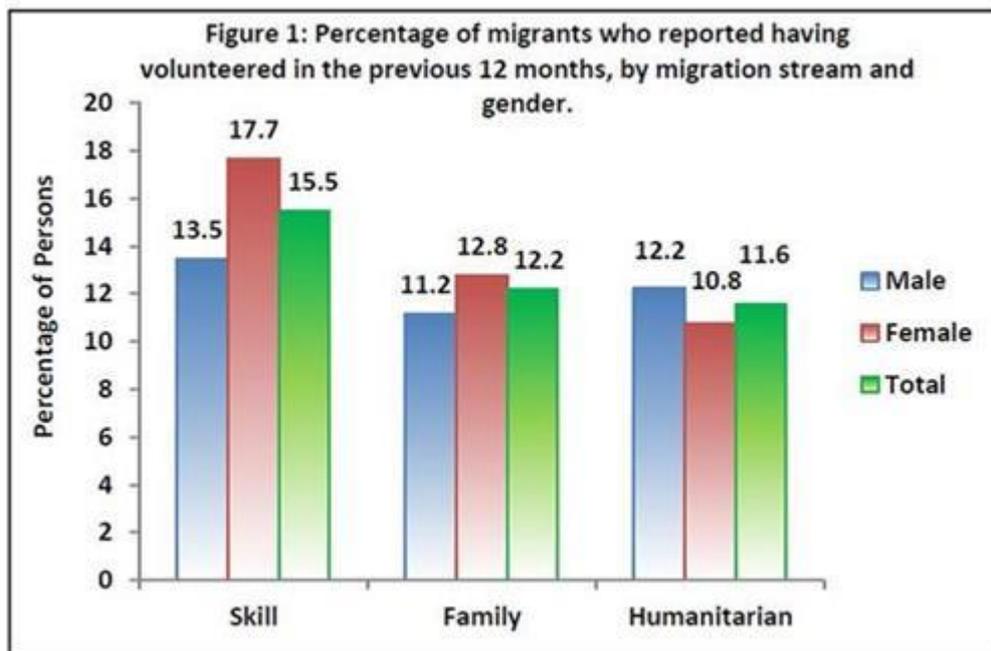
³ <https://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/media-and-resources/publications/new-arrival-communities>

⁴ The ABS defines a volunteer as someone who has provided unpaid help in the form of time, service or skills through an organisation or group in the previous 12 months. (ABS, Voluntary Work. Australia, Catalogue 4441.0)

the ABS began national voluntary work surveys in 1995 with 31% of people aged over 18 years volunteering⁵.

At a population level, in 2014, recent migrants were less likely than people born in Australia to have done voluntary work in the last 12 months. However, surveys of this scale don't tend to reach new arrival populations, nor do they capture informal volunteering activity. There is evidence to suggest that length of time in Australia is linked to higher formal volunteer rates. Migrants living in Australia for less than 12 months are less likely to formally volunteer (or volunteer in formally recognised roles) than those who have lived in Australia for longer periods of time. Similarly, participation in civic and political groups was also dependent on length of time in Australia. These findings suggest that as new migrants accrue social capital and their networks develop overtime they are more likely to participate in social and community groups and volunteering⁶.

Data from the Australian Census and Migrants Integrated Dataset (ACMID) compares the rates of volunteering by looking at a range of economic and demographic variables and migration streams (see figure below). The data indicates that humanitarian arrivals tend to have the lowest rate of volunteering (11%) when compared with family stream (12%) and skilled stream (16%). Females from the family and skilled stream have higher rates of volunteering than males, while males in the humanitarian stream had slightly higher rates than females.



Source: <http://scoa.org.au/newsletter-articles/new-from-the-department-of-social-services>

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<http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Latestproducts/4159.0Main%20Features12014?opendocument&tabname=Summary&prodno=4159.0&issue=2014&num=&view>

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<http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Previousproducts/3416.0Main%20Features12012?opendocument&tabname=Summary&prodno=3416.0&issue=2012&num=&view=>

Data collected from large population surveys does not capture the full extent of volunteer participation among new migrants. There tends to be high levels of under-reporting where new migrants are not surveyed. This is shown in the low rates of volunteering in the ACMID dataset. The concept of 'volunteering' has minimal resonance among some ethnic groups as they perceive the work that they do as "helping out" or a community obligation. It may also be a reflection of the types of societies they come from which tend to be collective based rather than ones that imbue individualism (Hugo, 2011).

In Canada, Guo (2014) found that migrants (40%) are less likely to volunteer than people born in Canada (49%). However, those migrants who do volunteer are more likely to contribute slightly more hours (171 hours as compared with 163 hours). Similarly Leong (2008) found that CALD communities have lower levels of volunteering with migrants from non-English speaking countries less likely to have volunteered in the past 12 months than those from English speaking countries or from Australian born people.

The findings based on the AMEP client survey did not ask exactly the same question as the ABS volunteer survey which focuses on respondent's volunteer activities over the previous 12 months. There was a single question in this survey. Respondents nominated from a pre-set list of activities "do you do any of these as a volunteer?" The purpose of this question is to allow the respondent to identify and select their current volunteer participation.

Migrants are not passive citizens; rather they use their agency to actively engage in bonding and bridging activities. Volunteering is one mechanism that provides new migrants with opportunity to learn new skills and knowledge, grow their social networks and gain experiences that may be applied in the job market (Guo, 2014). Essentially volunteering can be seen as a pathway to social inclusion, enhanced individual functioning, commitment and participation in the wider community (Leong, 2008).

Methodology for the Survey

This report is based on a survey that was administered in March 2015 to 386 students undertaking the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) at AMES in Melbourne. The survey asked questions about how, where and in what time frame new arrivals meet others outside their immediate family or community, whether they have volunteered or received help from a volunteer. The results were analysed to find out whether there were any differences in people's experiences related to their migration category, age, gender or length of time in Australia.

The paper based survey was given to AMEP students located at three AMES sites - St Albans, Noble Park and Flagstaff. It was administered in English and the five most prevalent community languages of students in these centres - Chinese, Arabic, Vietnamese, Hakka Chin and Dari. These were the languages of the majority of students in beginning level classes at the three sites at the time of the survey. Wherever possible, AMES staff members with these same first languages assisted in the administration of the survey. This assistance included explaining the purpose of the survey, going through the instructions and clarifying any unknown concepts or vocabulary. It took participants between 15 to 30 minutes to complete the survey with the majority taking around 20 minutes.

The survey consisted of 27 questions and was divided into three sections.

1. Demographics
2. Meeting new people
3. Participation and volunteering

The survey was piloted with two classes. The first pilot was at Flagstaff site in Melbourne Central Business District and one at St Albans in the Western metropolitan region. Comments and feedback on the pilot survey were incorporated into the final version.

Prior to the roll out of the survey, teachers were provided with the key concepts and vocabulary to discuss in English classes. This preparation aimed to increase participants' understanding of the context and the concepts canvassed in the survey.

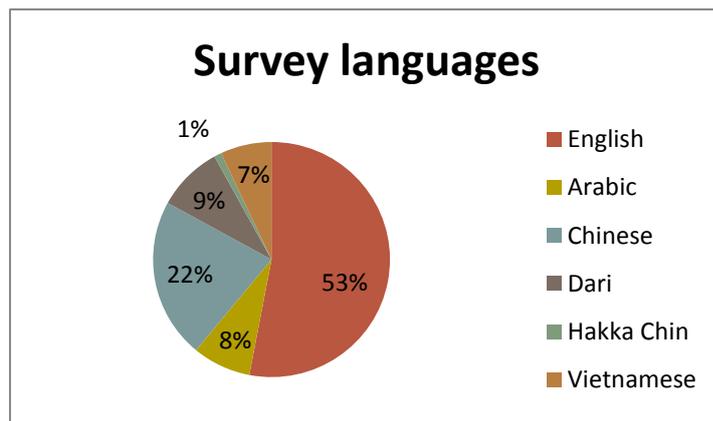
Limitations of the study

This survey provides some useful top level data about the way in which new arrivals to Australia become socially connected and their level of volunteer participation. Collecting nuanced data via a paper based survey is problematic particularly when the questions need to be clearly and simply conveyed for ease of comprehension. Given that the survey was conducted in first language it was difficult to collect any qualitative (open ended) responses in the survey because of translation issues. There is scope to explore in greater depth the way in which new arrivals actively develop their social capital via networks and connections with the community.

Survey Findings

Demographics

Just under half the surveys (43%) were conducted in respondents' first language, while 53% were conducted in English.



Two thirds of respondents who completed the survey were women. This is consistent with the enrolment patterns of the AMEP where there are more women than men attending English classes. More than half the respondents were aged 25 to 44. Just under half of those who completed the survey were completing CSWE 1 level. Most had arrived on a migrant visa, which includes the Family and Skilled streams.

	Frequency	%
Gender		
Male	140	36
Female	243	63
Not stated	3	1
Total	386	100
Age		
0-17	3	1
18-24	73	19
25-44	202	52

45-54	51	13
55 or older	50	13
Prefer not to say	7	2
Total	386	100
CSWE Level		
CSWE1	188	49
CSWE2	142	37
CSWE3	56	14
Total	386	100
Type of Visa		
Migrant visa	263	68
Humanitarian or refugee	94	25
Other	21	5
Prefer not to say	8	2
Total	386	100

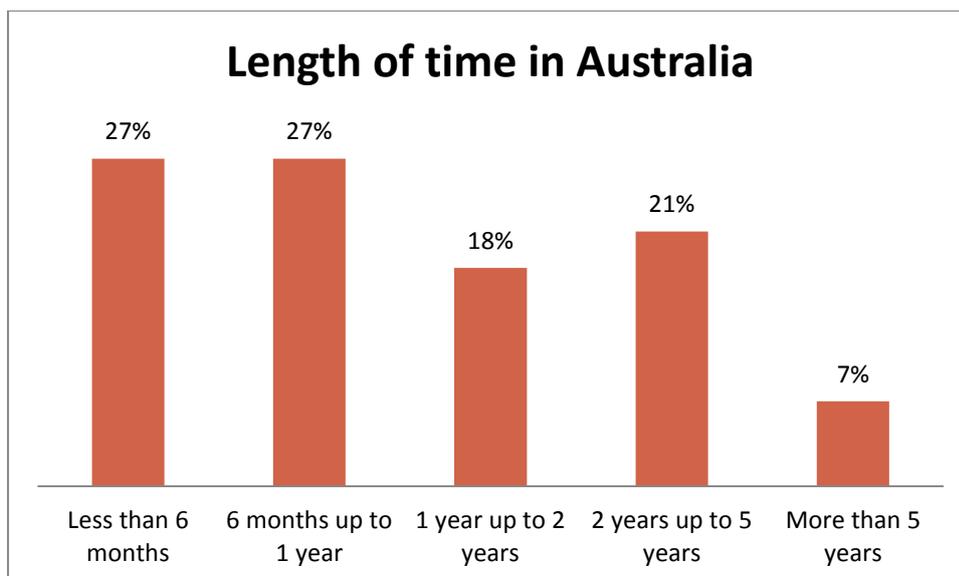
Country of Origin

Respondents came from all continents across the globe. Just over one quarter of the AMEP students surveyed came from North East Asia, while 18 per cent came from South East Asia.

Regional area	Frequency	Per cent
North East Asia (China, Hong Kong, Tibet, Taiwan)	99	26
South East Asia (Myanmar, Cambodia, Thailand, Vietnam, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines)	71	18
Not stated	64	17
Middle East (Iran, Iraq, Turkey, Syria)	34	9
Central Asia (Afghanistan)	28	7
Southern & East Africa (Ethiopia, Eritrea, Somalia)	28	7
Southern Asia (India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka)	24	6
South Eastern Europe (Italy, Albania, Bosnia, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia)	16	4
North Africa & the Middle East (Egypt, Sudan, South Sudan)	7	2
Eastern Europe (Hungary, Russia, Ukraine)	6	2
South America (Argentina, Ecuador, Chile, Columbia)	5	1
Japan & Korea	2	1
Central America (Costa Rica)	1	0
Sub-Saharan Africa (Congo)	1	0
Total	386	100

Length of time in Australia

Most respondents were new arrivals with more than half (54%) having been in Australia for less than a year. Just under three quarters (72%) had lived in Australia for less than two years.



Household employment

Respondents were asked the question “have you ever had a job in Australia?” Just over one quarter (28%) answered yes to this question. In terms of household employment, 61% of respondents lived in a household where someone had a job. This may include the respondent and/or other family members or people they live with.

Meeting new people

Many migrants arriving in Australia from non-English speaking backgrounds gravitate to communities where they are able to interact and mix with people from their own language and / or cultural background. The literature review above indicates that new migrants initially rely on their own family and community networks (bonding capital) to help them settle into a new life in Australia. Two questions were designed to ascertain whether new migrants had met people outside their family and own community. The first was a yes /no response to “have you met people outside your family and own community since arriving in Australia?” The second question asked respondents to select from a list of places where they had met people. Given that most respondents had been in Australia for less than two years, the vast majority of them had indeed met other people outside their family and community, with only 6 per cent saying that they had not. When an analysis was undertaken looking at length of time in Australia and meeting people outside their family and community, among respondents who had been in Australia for less than 6 months, there was still a very high percentage (90%) who had met people outside their family and community.

Met other people outside your family and own community since arrival in Australia	Frequency	Per cent
Yes	345	94
No	21	6
Total	366	100

Places respondents met other

Respondents were asked where they met people. The top four places were AMEP classes, local shops, at a religious meeting place and in their neighbourhood. Other places identified by respondents included social media, medical centres, sport and fitness venues and public transport. The prevalence of meeting people in AMEP classes reinforces the significance of this program in

early settlement for social participation opportunities and the development of both bonding and bridging capital.

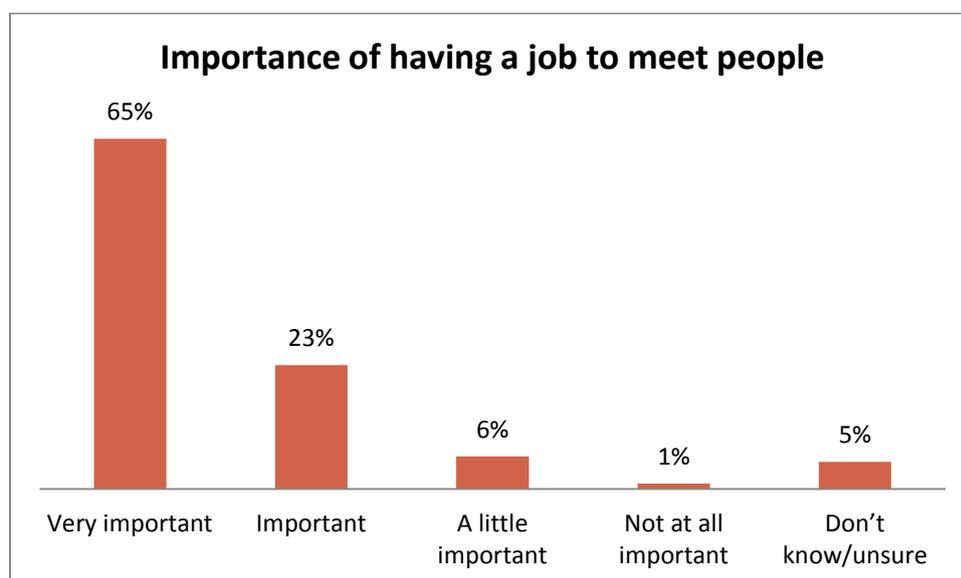
Where did you meet people	Yes %	No %	Does not apply to me %	TOTAL %
At AMEP class	98	2	0	100
At the local shops	61	36	3	100
At a religious meeting place	54	35	11	100
In your neighbourhood	51	19	30	100
At work	40	38	22	100
At a sports or other social club	38	47	15	100
At you children's school	37	39	24	100

Other places where respondents meet people:

- Social media (eg facebook), chat rooms, meet up online,
- Medical centres, clinics, hospital,
- Gatherings like parties,
- Fitness activities, gym, swim
- Library
- Local parks, beach
- Family and friends
- Public transport

Importance of having a job for meeting people

The majority of respondents (88%) felt that having a job would be either very important or important as a way to meet people.



Importance of children's activities to meet people

Having children and taking them to and from a range of activities, enables parents and families to integrate with the broader community. Children provide the conduit and open up a range of opportunities to meet new people with shared interests. Respondents with children were asked about the importance of children's activities in meeting people. Eighty one per cent of respondents

stated that it was either very important or important to have the opportunity to meet people through children’s activities.

Importance children’s activities to meet people	Frequency	Per Cent
Very important	214	62
Important	67	19
A little important	13	4
Not at all important	51	15
Total	345	100

Ease of making friends/meet people outside your family/community

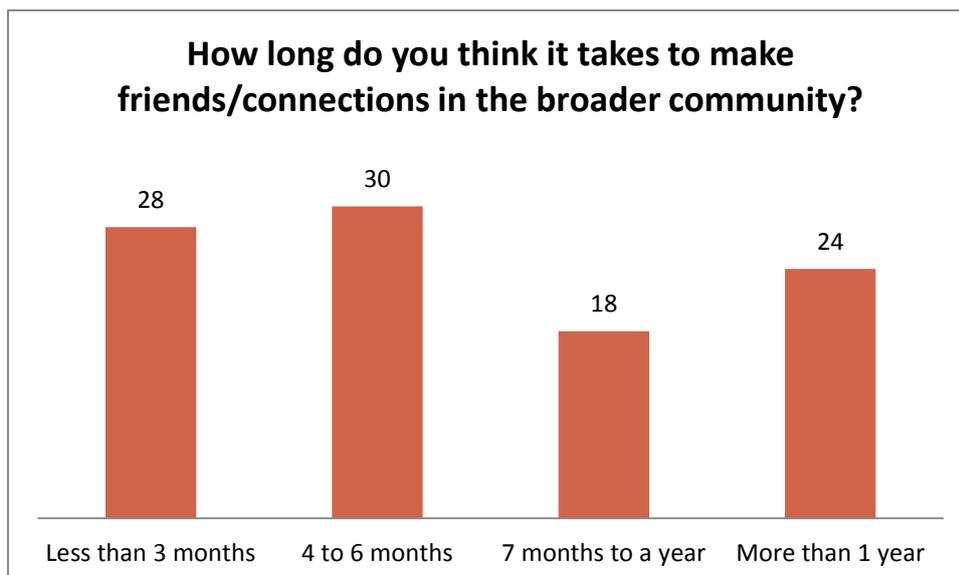
Respondents were asked how easy it was to meet friends or people outside their family or community. More than half (58%) said that it was difficult or very difficult to meet people, while 42% said that it would be either easy or very easy. As noted in the literature cited above, many new migrants feel comfort within their own family and friendship groups and the prospect of meeting new people in a new country where English is not your first language can be daunting for some.

Further analysis of the data according to length of time in Australia and English proficiency indicates that these factors have little or no impact upon respondent’s perception of meeting people in Australia. Respondents in CSWE 3 classes were slightly more likely to say it was either easy or very easy (46%) to meet people when compared with those in CSWE 1 and CSWE 2 classes (both 41%). There was no clear cut correlation between length of time in Australia and the difficulty or ease of making new friends.



Making friends/meet people outside your family/community

Most respondents (58%) felt that it would take them up to six months to make friends and connections in the broader community, while just under a quarter thought that it would take them more than a year. Further analysis was undertaken looking at length of time in Australia and whether there was any correlation with the predicted length of time to make friends and connection in the community. This analysis found that length of time in Australia was not a significant factor as 93% of respondents had been here for less than five years. It would be interesting to survey a cohort of migrants who had been in Australia for more than five years to ascertain any differences between longer and short term settlement of migrants.



Feeling part of the community

Current living arrangements

Respondents were asked about their current living arrangements. There were two questions in relation to this. The first asked respondents how many homes they had lived in since arrival and how long they had lived in their current home. The aim of these questions was to determine respondents' length of time in their neighbourhood and whether this had an impact on social connection in their community. More than half the respondents (56%) had lived in one house since their arrival in Australia, while 28% had lived in two houses. Most (63%) had lived in their current home for less than 12 months. This is consistent with their new arrival status.

Number of homes lived in since arriving in Australia	Frequency	%
1	210	56
2	106	28
3	35	9
4	14	4
5 to 9	9	2
10 or more	3	1
Total	377	100
Length of time in current home		
Less than 6 months	138	36
6 to 12 months	102	27
1 to 2 years	78	21
3 to 5 years	48	13
More than 5 years	12	3
Total	378	100

Interaction with neighbours

Sixty-one per cent of respondents said that they knew their neighbours. When asked, “Could you get help from your neighbours if needed”, three quarters answered in the affirmative. It is not clear from these questions whether respondent’s neighbours were from the same or a different cultural group. However, the responses may be indicative of reasonably strong bonding capital among new migrants who have been in Australia for a relatively short period of time.

Just over half of the respondents (56%) who had been living in their house for up to 12 months knew their neighbours, while 85% of respondents who had been living in their house for between two to five years knew their neighbours. More than two-thirds 67% who had lived in their house for less than 12 months could get help from their neighbours. These survey results indicate that there was a high level of acceptance and reciprocity in the broader community within the neighbourhoods where the respondents to this survey reside.

Do you know your neighbours	Frequency	Per cent
Yes	232	61
No	143	39
Total	375	100

Getting help from your neighbours if needed	Frequency	Per cent
Yes	274	75
No	94	25
Total	368	100

Further analysis was undertaken about whether length of time in Australia had an impact on respondents knowing their neighbours. The table below is consistent with the findings related to length of time in current home and indicates that the longer the person has been in Australia the more likely they are to know their neighbours. Those who had been in Australia longer were more likely to be able to get help from their neighbours if required.

Length of time in Australia	Do you know your neighbours		
	Yes %	No %	Total %
Less than 6 months	54	46	100
6 months up to 1 year	51	49	100
1 year – up to 2 years	71	29	100
2 years – up to 5 years	75	25	100
More than 5 years	75	25	100

Support from neighbours by length of time in Australia

Length of time in Australia	Could you get help from your neighbours if you needed it		
	Yes%	No %	Total %
Less than 6 months	67	33	100
6 months up to 1 year	64	36	100
1 year – up to 2 years	88	12	100
2 years – up to 5 years	86	14	100
More than 5 years	78	22	100

Length of time in Australia	Think of all the people you have had contact with over the past month. How many spoke the same first language as you?						
	All %	Most %	About half %	A few %	None %	Don't know %	Total %
Less than 6 months	4	45	18	28	4	1	100
6 months up to 1 year	10	37	21	28	3	1	100
1 year – up to 2 years	9	45	20	26	0	0	100
2 years – up to 5 years	4	33	14	36	5	8	100
More than 5 years	16	28	20	28	4	4	100

Activities that help respondent to feel part of the Australian community

Making friends outside the family, followed by working, were activities most likely to make respondents feel part of the Australian community. Chatting to neighbours, attending arts/cultural street festivals and playing sport were also important.

Activities that help respondents feel part of the Australian community	Yes %	No %	Does not apply to me %	TOTAL %
Making friends outside the family	91	6	3	
Chatting to neighbours	75	19	6	100
Working	69	19	12	100
Attending arts/cultural street festivals	66	25	9	100
Playing sport	60	27	13	100
Volunteering	57	28	15	100
Belonging to a religious group	50	34	16	100
Meeting parents at your children's school	45	28	27	100
Joining a club	44	36	20	100

Other activities included:

- Going to the library
- Social media – e.g. online chatting
- Attending school and university

Same language contacts

Respondents were asked to nominate the proportion of people that they had been in contact with over the past few months that had the same first language as them. Just under half the respondents surveyed (46%) stated that either all or most (see table below) of the people they had come into contact with spoke the same first language as them. This was particularly the case for those who had been in Australia for less than 12 months. Those who had been in Australia for more than two years were more likely to come into contact with people outside their language group.

Number of people contacted over the past months with the same first language as respondent	Frequency	Per Cent
All	27	7
Most	148	39
About half	70	19
A few	111	30
None	12	3
Don't know/not sure	9	2
Total	377	100

Use of social media to contact people

Social media is a useful tool for people to maintain contact with their friends and family in their home country. It is also used to make contact with people while living in Australia. The survey results indicate that eight out of ten respondents use social media to contact people. This survey result is consistent with the Scanlon report on new arrivals (Markus, 2013).

Use of social media to contact people	Frequency	Per cent
Yes	304	80
No	74	20
Total	378	100

Participation and volunteering

As noted in the literature review participation in community groups, clubs and volunteering are ways that new migrants can become more socially connected both within their own community and also the broader community. The following section looks at the types of activities respondents were involved in and whether they undertook volunteer work.

Current participation in local community groups or clubs

Less than one quarter (23%) of respondents were involved in local community groups or clubs, with 77% stating that they did not participate. Those respondents who were involved in local community groups or clubs were asked to nominate the composition of the groups they belonged to. The survey results indicate that religious groups and political groups are more likely to be made up of members from the respondent's own country, while parent's groups, sporting clubs and social groups are made up of people from different backgrounds and languages.

Composition of the groups respondents belong	Only from my country %	All different backgrounds/ languages %	Does not apply to me %	TOTAL %
Mothers or parents group	29	30	41	100
Sporting club or group	24	46	30	100
Religious group (eg church, mosque, temple)	56	34	10	100
Social group (eg art, craft, music)	30	34	36	100
Political group	12	9	79	100

Respondents were asked ‘do you think you will join a local community group or club in the next 12 months’ just over one quarter (27%) of respondents answered in the affirmative. Fourteen per cent said that they did not have this intention. There was a high level of uncertainty with 41% saying that they may join a group or club while, 18% were did not know or were unsure. These findings may be attributed to the new arrival status of the cohort of AMEP students who completed the survey. They were yet to think about how they might integrate into the community as part of a group or club.

Intention to join a local group or club in the next 12 months	Frequency	Per cent
Yes	101	27
No	54	14
Maybe	152	41
Don't know/unsure	66	18
Total	373	100

Places respondents provide help as a volunteer

More than half (52%) of the respondents who helped out as a volunteer were involved in activities that helped other new migrants. Helping at school and at their place of worship was noted by 44% of respondents. One quarter of respondents who volunteered were involved in a range of other activities in care settings, medical and philanthropic agencies.

Places respondent provides help as a volunteer	Yes %	No %	Total %
Help other new migrants	52	48	100
Help at school	44	56	100
Help at sporting club	27	73	100
Help at church, mosque, temple	44	56	100
Other volunteering	24	76	100

Other types of volunteer roles

- Child care
- Aged care
- Clean up day
- Medical Centre, hospital
- Helping the poor
- Red Cross

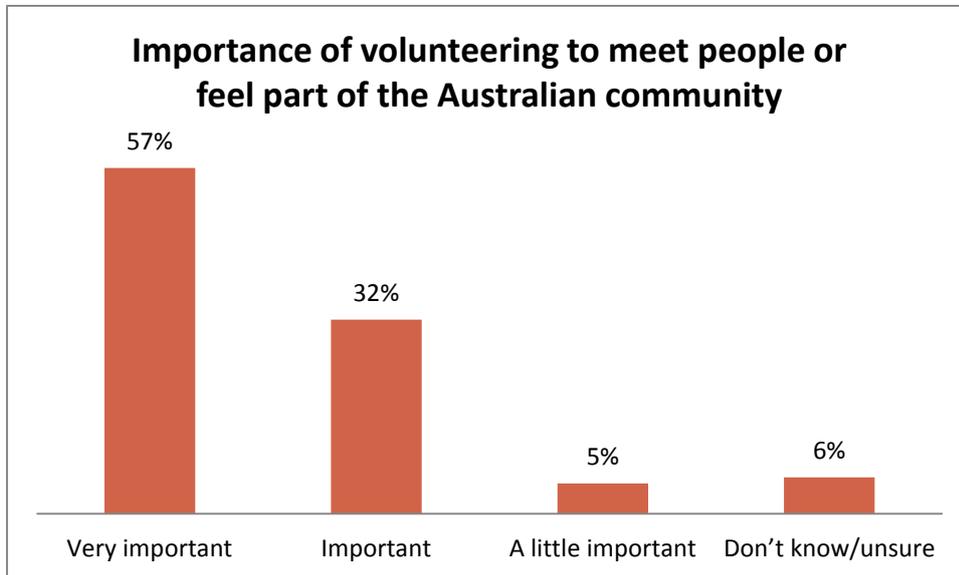
Receiving help from a volunteer

Respondents were asked about the types of help they may have received from a volunteer. Of those who had received help, three quarters said that they were assisted with learning English. About a third had received help to settle into their neighbourhood and to learn to drive.

Has respondent received help from a volunteer	Yes	No	Total
Help with learning English	76	24	100
Help with learning to drive	30	70	100
Help with settling into the neighbourhood	33	67	100
Other	17	83	100

Importance of volunteering to meet people or feel part of the Australian community

The survey results confirm other research findings that volunteering is an important mechanism to allow people to become socially connected. It was clear from the survey results that 89% thought that volunteering was either very important or important as a way to meet people or feel part of the Australian community. This finding reflects a desire from respondents to become more socially connected both within their own community and the broader society.



Summary and Conclusions

Community participation and social connection are important for all citizens. They are the foundations for good health and well-being and contribute to the cohesion of communities (Ziersch et al, 2005).

The findings of this survey demonstrate the ways in which new migrants are involved in developing bonding and bridging capital. From a bonding perspective the survey indicated the extent of respondents' interaction within their family or own community, the extent of their networks, whether they know and if they can get help from their neighbours if needed, participation in local groups and clubs and the make-up of these groups and clubs in terms of languages and backgrounds.

In relation to volunteering the questions in the survey were designed to ascertain level of volunteer engagement in terms of giving and receiving volunteer support and the ways in which volunteering links people with the broader community.

Respondents provided comment on questions designed to ascertain the ease or difficulty of meeting people and making contacts outside their family/community group. The extent of the respondents' bridging capital was also tested by looking at the level of involvement in activities outside friends, family and community groups. The findings were then analysed by the length of time the respondent had been in Australia.

The survey findings are consistent with the latest research and evidence that newly arrived migrants take some time to settle and build social connections with the broader community. Generally speaking, the social connections forged by those who had been here less than two years were mostly confined to their own communities and language groups (bonding capital), whilst respondents who have been in Australia for more than two years were more likely to have developed networks and contacts within the broader community (bridging).

The survey findings demonstrate that respondents acknowledge the importance of meeting people in the broader society. When asked "have you met people outside your family and own community since arriving in Australia", nine out of ten respondents said they had. The three most popular places to meet people were at the shops, places of worship and within their neighbourhood. This is a positive finding given that many respondents had relatively low levels of English and had been in Australia for a short period of time, although it is difficult to gauge from a closed question in a survey the quality of the relationship. The results indicate that it takes some time for migrants to meet people outside their family and community networks with those having lived in Australia for more than two years more likely to have these types of networks.

Nine out of ten respondents, stated that making friends outside their family network, made them feel part of the Australian community. Employment was seen as an important way to increase an individual's social connections. For those respondents who had children, being involved in their activities increased the likelihood of meeting a range of people from the wider community. Respondents acknowledged the difficulty of making friends in the general community, with most saying it would take more than six months. Implicit in these survey results is the intention of new migrants to integrate and become part of the general community.

Almost two thirds of those surveyed said that they knew their neighbours. Among those that knew their neighbours, three quarters said that they could get help if they needed it. This is encouraging given the relatively short time many people had lived in their current home. It is not clear from the survey data whether respondent's neighbours were from the same cultural group.

Social media was seen as an important tool to contact people to arrange social events. The survey findings are consistent with those of the Scanlon report on recent arrivals (Markus, 2013) with 80% of respondents using social media to contact and keep in touch with people. This is an under-researched area and more work could be done to look at the role that social media plays in the settlement process particularly for new arrivals without pre-existing social connections, or those living in rural or remote areas.

A high proportion of respondents were not involved in any community groups or clubs at the time of the survey with a significant number being unsure whether they would join a club or group in the next 12 months. This question was hypothetical it is often difficult for people to predict what they may or may not do in a new context at a future time when much of their focus is dealing with the day-to-day issues of settlement.

Volunteer work was common among respondents. Most were involved in volunteer work at either their children's school or at a religious organisation. Those who had received help from a volunteer had been supported with learning and improving their English. Overall, almost nine out of ten respondents felt that volunteering was important to make them feel part of the Australian community. Further research could be conducted to look at the proportion of migrants who receive volunteer support upon arrival and then in turn give back to their communities as volunteers at a later time.

The findings of this survey are positive and encouraging and strongly indicate that newly arrived migrants appreciate the importance of being social connected both within and outside their own communities. The results show a level of reciprocity with the host community welcoming new migrants into their neighbourhoods.

Successful settlement of new arrivals is part of the multicultural fabric of Australian society. They are an integral part of our nation's economy and its social capital. Community participation and social connection are not only issues for new migrants but an endeavour and responsibility shared by both new arrivals and the broader community.

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