

The JSCI and CALD Job Seekers

AMES would argue that the JSCI has failed to identify the levels of disadvantage experienced by the majority of the 2559 CALD and refugee job seekers currently in Stream 1. Supports available to Stream 1 job seekers are not appropriate or adequate for the majority of this specialist cohort of job seekers.

AMES experience in working with refugee job seekers who have not been identified by the JSCI as significantly disadvantaged is that they, too, have all or many of the characteristics of disadvantage common to newly arrived refugees. While some have qualifications and skills, their refugee experience and lack of knowledge of Australian work place culture and Australian work history indicates a need for intensive support in transitioning to work.

The following section provides recommendations on changes to weightings and additional questions to increase the effectiveness of the JSCI in identifying disadvantage for refugee and migrant job seekers.

Proposed amendments to factors and weightings in the JSCI

Age & Gender

Within the CALD job seeker population there is an additional level of disadvantage experienced by newly arrived young migrants and refugees that can not be captured in the Age and Gender factor - as this disadvantage is not common to all English Speaking Background youth.

Young CALD job seekers - especially refugees - will often have experienced the disadvantages of a complex mix of factors including dislocation, interrupted or no schooling, language and literacy issues, no vocational skills or qualifications, no work experience at all and no work experience in Australia.

Additional indicator in Age and Gender for CALD Youth

To identify this group and to recognise the disadvantages they face it is recommended that an additional sub-factor be added to this factor weighed to recognise the disadvantages faced by young CALD job seekers. This would be added to the list describing the characteristics of disadvantaged teenage job seekers. For example:

A disadvantaged teenager is a job seeker aged between 15 to 19 years with one or more of the following characteristics:

- mainly been unemployed in the last two years;
- has completed less than Year 10 at school;
- is Indigenous;
- **is CALD**
- lives in temporary accommodation;
- is a sole parent;
- is a disclosed ex-offender.

Recency of Work Experience

Recency of work experience is a particular issue and a major barrier for CALD job seekers - especially refugees, who may have had little or no work experience prior to arrival in Australia and who have no work experience in Australia. These job seekers have had no opportunity to demonstrate work habits or to develop networks or employer contacts in Australia. The job-readiness of many CALD job seekers is significantly impacted by long periods of absence from any kind of 'regular' employment.

Refugee job seekers - especially those who have spent time in refugee camps, may not have been able to look for work over the past two or more years. This adds another level of complexity to the disadvantage they face in terms of finding employment in Australia. Not only do they have the disadvantage of no work experience in Australia, but they also lack the experience of seeking employment.

Additional work activity descriptor and weighting

To account for this it is recommended that a further sub-factor be added to the list of main activities over the last two years:

Not working and not looking for work (unable to look for work due to refugee experience)

This category of job seekers should have the highest weighting for this factor.

Additional indicator: CALD job seekers with work experience not undertaken in Australia

It is recommended that an additional sub-factor be added to this factor to distinguish between recent work undertaken outside of Australia and work experience in Australia. The score should be weighted to reflect the impact of the disadvantage that no Australian work experience presents in securing employment. For example:

If you have had regular work in the past two years was that work in Australia?

YES (no points)

NO (points to recognise disadvantage)

Job Seeker History

Job Seeker History recognises that job seekers who experience a protracted time on income support and/or multiple spells on income support are more disadvantaged in terms of finding employment.

As points allocated for this factor are based on the job seeker's Centrelink registration and benefit payment records, recently arrived refugee job seekers are automatically excluded from points under this factor as none of them have, by definition, been in the country long enough to have been on benefits for 12-23 or 24+ months.

Refugee and humanitarian visa holders are required to register with Centrelink within the first week of arrival. Therefore the length of time these job seekers have been registered reflects the length of time they have been in Australia. 357 of the 365 refugee/humanitarian job seekers registered with AMES (98%) have been in Australia for less than 24 months. Just over 80% have been registered for less than 12 months.

Refugee job seekers - many of whom who have had protracted times of unemployment in refugee camps, and/or have been waiting to gain entry to Australia for at least 2 years - have no record of income support in Australia. Yet these are amongst the most disadvantaged job seekers and need higher levels of support to gain, and maintain, employment.

Recognition of impact of refugee experience on job seeker history

To address this, it is proposed that *a refugee/humanitarian visa* is weighted as the equivalent of *being on income support for 12-23 months*.

Sub-factors	Points
<i>Time on income support component</i>	
Duration on income support 0-12 months	0
Duration on income support 12-23 months (or refugee/humanitarian visa holder)	6
Duration on income support 24+ months	12
<i>Number of times on income support component</i>	
More than one time on income support	1
Crisis Payment recipient	1

Educational Attainment

As the JSCI recognises, the link between education and employment is well documented in the economic literature and the lower the level of educational attainment, the higher a job seeker's labour market disadvantage.

From AMES long experience of working with CALD clients, those who have attained Secondary and Post-Secondary qualifications can identify the highest level of schooling completed as well as any further qualifications gained. Clients with low levels of education or no schooling at all (especially the very recently arrived) will not know what level of schooling they have completed.

High percentages of refugee and CALD job seekers respond that they do not know what level of schooling they have completed. 31% of AMES refugee job seekers and nearly 52% of other CALD job seekers currently registered with AMES have responded *Unknown* to this factor.

To more accurately capture the job readiness of these job seekers it is recommended that a response of *Unknown* be added to the sub-factors and weighted as the equivalent of *<Year 10*.

Sub-factors	Points
Degree/Post-graduate	0
Year 12/TAFE/Diploma	0
Year 10/11	1
< Year 10	2
Unknown	2

Vocational Qualifications

As noted in the current JSCI, there is a significant difference in employability between those with work qualifications and those without.

Higher weighting

This factor requires higher weighting in recognition of the need to build employability - the skills and capabilities that job seekers need to gain and retain employment in the current labour market.

Additional explanatory notes

There are additional complexities for migrant and refugee job seekers that need to be recognised: overseas qualifications may or may not be recognised in Australia, and many, particularly refugees, will have no work-related qualifications at all.

It is recommended that notes for the sub-factor *Vocational qualifications not useful* include ***Qualifications gained overseas may not be seen as useful by employers.***

This would recognise that (i) employers are often more reluctant to employ a job seeker with overseas qualifications from refugee source countries and (ii) there will often be gaps in applying overseas qualifications directly to an Australian workplace

English Proficiency

This factor requires job seekers to self assess English language and literacy levels and this gives rise to the issue of the validity of the assessment. Research has shown that most people over-assess their own language and literacy abilities. Centrelink staff who administer the initial JSCI are not trained language assessors and can only be expected to form a general impression of the job seeker's language and literacy levels.

Higher weighting for poor language and literacy

Poor levels on English language currently carry a relatively low weighting. AMES experience is that lack of language skills is a major barrier to employment and requires additional and often intensive support to prepare the job seeker for work in Australia. It also requires additional work with employers to broker employment for these job seekers.

Additional language descriptor

Job seekers who have no English language at all are severely disadvantaged in terms of employment. It is recommended that a further sub-factor be added to the list of proficiency levels:

Sub-factors	Points
Good English proficiency	0
Mixed English proficiency	1
Poor English proficiency	2
No English language skills	3

Country of Birth

Country of origin groupings and weightings for country groupings require regular review to reflect current immigration trends.

Country of Birth

This factor captures the CALD job seekers' refugee or humanitarian visa status. As refugee status is highly significant in terms of barriers to employment it is critical that this information be captured. Therefore it is recommended that a response to

Did you arrive in Australia on a refugee or humanitarian visa OR

Were you granted a refugee or humanitarian visa when you arrived in Australia?

is limited to YES or NO and does not include *Do not wish to answer* or *Do not know*.

YES defaults to the equivalent of sub-factor *Duration on income support 12-23 months*

NO (no points)

See the discussion in *Job Seeker History* above.

Living Circumstances

The current JSCI does not have the capacity to take into account that living alone or in other disrupted circumstances (with non-family or with another family) is highly disadvantageous for young refugee and CALD job seekers.

The impact of these types of living arrangements on young CALD job seekers needs to be reflected in the JSCI for this sub-group. There may well be other specialist sub-groups who are also negatively impacted by similar living circumstances.

Additional sub-factor: CALD youth not living with family

It is recommended that an additional sub-factor be added to this factor to identify young CALD job seekers living alone or in disrupted circumstances. The score should be weighted to reflect the impact of the disadvantage this presents.

For example:

Sub-factors	Points
Lives with spouse	0
Lives with non-family members	0
Other living conditions	0
Lives alone	1
CALD youth (other specialist?) lives with non-family	2
CALD youth (other specialist?) lives alone	3
Lone parent with youngest child 6-15 years old	3
Lone parent with youngest child <6 years old	4
Partnered with youngest child 6-15 years old	1
Partnered with youngest child <6 years old	3

Note: there are limited numbers of job seekers in this category and therefore this represents limited cost implications.