

# Submission to Joint Standing Committee on Migrant Settlement Outcomes

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January 2017

## **Young Australian's Education and Employment Transitions: Comparing Young Immigrants' Wellbeing**

This submission addresses the need to specify actual outcomes of young migrants since 2000 compared to longer term Australians, before concluding that young migrants are more likely to be disengaged from education or employment, or as a broad group having reduced social engagement. The submission refers to national and international comparisons (Terms of Reference (TOR) 1 and 2), whether English language ability reflected in school achievement affects school or further education attainment (TOR 3), and young people's wellbeing as a related matter (TOR 5).

The submission recommendations are based on PhD research, summarising quantitative findings from analysis of data from the Longitudinal Survey of Australian Youth (LSAY 2003-2013) and feedback from experienced service providers. Following the recommendations is a brief overview of young migrant education and employment outcomes. Appendix 2 provides an overview of the LSAY research, including comparative outcomes of young Australians focussing on education, employment and psychological wellbeing.

### **Recommendations**

1. Increase comparative research on education and employment beyond demographics based on Non-English Speaking Background, and/or immigrant - non-immigrant status.

### **Employment**

2. Increase support for work experience and part-time employment in the latter years of school and further education, especially for women and those from a migrant background.
3. Enhance brokering of business and mentor relationships in partnership with educational providers to increase social networks and understanding of Australian work practices, especially for young migrant women.
4. Increase career awareness for parents of young people, especially those from a migrant background to emphasise the importance of work experience, or similar such as volunteering, in addition to education qualifications.
5. Promote the value of vocational education options for young people, especially for those from a migrant background.

### **Wellbeing**

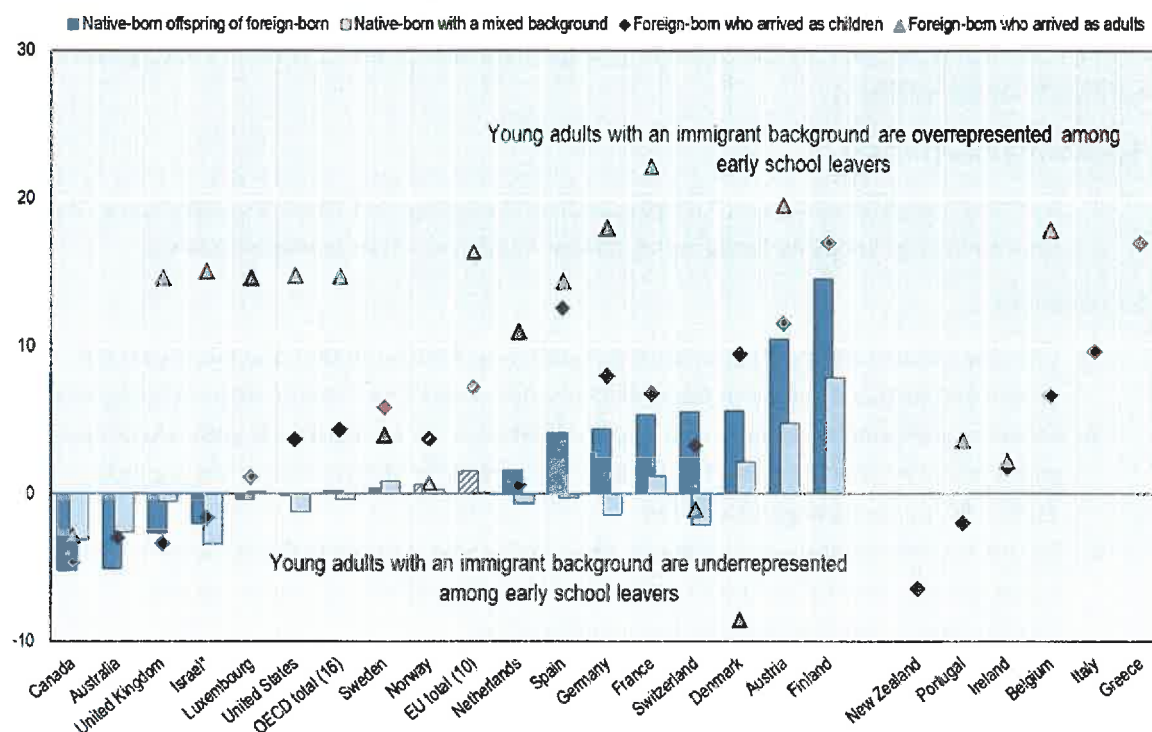
6. Reinstate national interventions linked to schools to support school completion and transitions to work, together with comprehensive program evaluations.
7. Enhance counselling support for young people, especially culturally sensitive services to address higher rates of psychological distress for young first generation female migrants.
8. Investigate more thoroughly and respond to the core issues of home life stresses, especially for those from refugee source countries. This includes childcare and home affordability.

## Background on Migrant Education and Employment outcomes

Twenty-five per cent of all young people in Australia aged 12-24 are first or second generation immigrants from a culturally and/or linguistic diverse background. Around four per cent came to Australia as refugees or have refugee ancestry (Hugo et al., 2014)<sup>1</sup>. Given that immigrants constitute a significant proportion of the population, ensuring they all have good employment outcomes as part of successful settlement has vital significance for future Australian productivity, prosperity and social engagement.

Although previous research indicates that educational achievement among immigrants at age 15 is, on average, equivalent to or slightly higher than that of other students, these averages hide wide variation in achievement within the immigrant student population. Even with this variation, post-school study rates are higher for young immigrants compared to longer term Australians (Marks, 2010; Thomson et al., 2013). Early school leaving does not appear to be a significant issue for young people with an immigrant background in Australia, the United Kingdom or Canada (OECD, 2015; refer Figure 1.).

Figure 1: Early school leavers among 15-24 year olds, 2013: Differences in percentage points with native-born offspring of native-born.



Source: OECD, 2015, *Indicators of Immigrant Integration: Settling In*: Fig 13.17

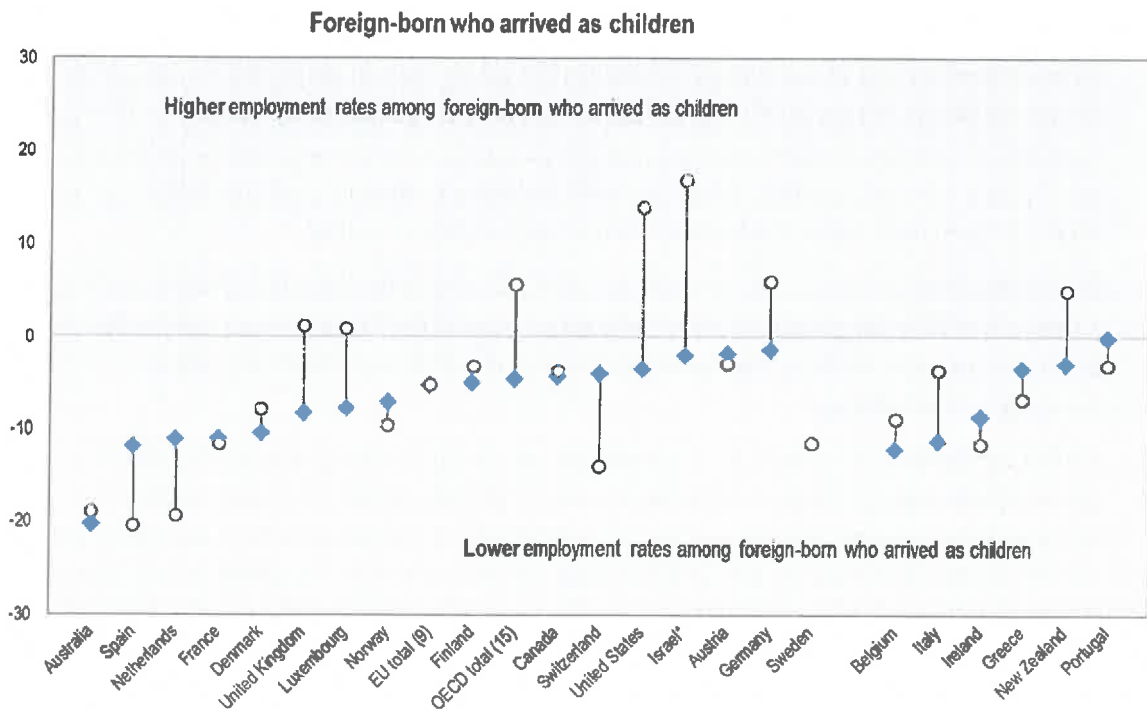
Although Human Capital Theory suggests that increased education should lead to improved likelihood of employment, rates of unemployment are higher among immigrants (Refer Figure 2: OECD, 2015; OECD, 2016). Australia, similar to the UK and Canada has a youth unemployment rate of around 13%. Since 2007-08, youth employment rates among those of migrant background have

<sup>1</sup> Please refer to Appendix 1 for Reference list

deteriorated in most countries, including Australia, more than among the offspring of the native-born. Australia has the largest difference in employment outcomes for foreign born young people who arrived as children, with about 20 per cent lower employment rates (OECD, 2015). The United Kingdom and Canada appear to have better outcomes, so lessons could be learned from these nations.

Participation in education and employment are preventative strategies to improve engagement and settlement outcomes, with associated effects on wellbeing. Existing education and employment empirical research does not recognise the diversity of the immigrant population sufficiently. There are qualitative case studies highlighting the challenges and outcomes of migrants, and in particular refugee and humanitarian entrants. However, beyond a few recent studies (eg Beadle, 2014; Creagh, 2014; Hugo et al., 2011, 2014;) there has been little comparative research of education-to-employment transitions comparing young refugee and humanitarian entrants to other migrant types or their longer-term resident Australian peers. Therefore, it is important to improve the comparative research and policy base to confirm these outcomes in the Australian context. Given that productive participation in the labour market, and improving lifetime wellbeing are aims of the Australian Government’s settlement and youth transitions policies (DSS, 2015; COAG, 2009), examining well-being of young immigrants as they transition through education into employment also has important social policy implications.

Figure 2: Employment rates and educational level, 15-34 year olds not in education, 2013. Differences in percentage points with native-born offspring of native-born.



Source: OECD, 2015, *Indicators of Immigrant Integration: Settling In*: Excerpt from Fig 13.2

There is a need for research that connects qualitative studies with the longitudinal statistical evidence on job seekers, through support services and into employment over time (Neumann et al., 2014; SGOA, 2013).

My research examines whether young immigrants differ from their longer-term Australian peers, addressing gaps in research and understanding by comparing post school outcomes according to country of birth and migrant status including: educational achievement, educational attainment, employment status and wellbeing.

## Summary

This LSAY (2003-2013) research (refer Appendix 2) based on 3699 young people concludes that:

**Education:** Students from first or second generation migrant background were less likely to leave school (than longer-term Australians) before completing Year 12, and more likely to obtain a tertiary entrance score (ATAR). This includes those from a refugee source-country background. Young women from refugee source countries constituted the highest proportion of those completing university studies. Longer term Australians were more likely to complete vocational education programs than young people from refugee source countries.

**Employment:** Completing an educational qualification after school provides advantages in the labour market, but the type of post-school qualification does not have a clear association with employment. Employment at age 20 is a significant predictor for employment at age 25. Compared to the full-time employed, those who were not employed in 2008 were about eight times more likely not to be employed in 2013. Those not employed were more likely to be female; or possessing only a school certificate rather than a university qualification. Those least likely to be employed were female migrants. Being a parent did not entirely account for this outcome. Completing further education does not appear to provide distinct employment advantages for women.

**Well-being:** Although the majority of young people were satisfied with their lives, young women reported higher levels of psychological distress than young men. Main predictors of psychological distress include poor ratings of general health, not being employed, being female, and life dissatisfaction. This dis-satisfaction includes: unhappiness with their career; their social situation (more so for young women); and their home life, with this being a stronger predictor for first generation migrants - with both males and females from refugee source countries.

**Limitations:** Feedback from service providers on these results generally corroborate the findings, however, the diversity of experience of immigrants from particular countries of birth requires additional focussed analyses. Further research using the 2006 and 2009 LSAY cohorts is needed to strengthen these findings.

**Recommendations** at the front of this document are based on this LSAY and other literature research. Although the OECD in *Investing in Youth: Australia* (2016), pays scant attention to migrant background, it recommends more systematic approaches to cooperation and the sharing of information between schools and external social services or brokers. Strategies to respond to a lack of national coordination should address gaps in outcomes. Initiatives used by other countries such as Denmark's career guidance system, and youth initiatives in Japan and Norway could be adapted to help young people and their families navigate the further education and work system (OECD, 2015; OECD, 2016). Additionally, addressing fragmented mental health support earlier, and the provision of affordable housing should be priorities of policies aimed at improving settlement outcomes.

### Appendix 1: References:

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## **Appendix 2: Comparative Research**

**Refer attachment**

# YOUNG AUSTRALIAN'S EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT TRANSITIONS



12/12/2016

MIGRANTS AND WELLBEING

The project compares post-school outcomes of young Australians, looking at migrant background and gender. The Longitudinal Survey of Australian Youth (LSAY) 2003-2013 commenced collecting information from 10,370 students aged 15 at secondary schools throughout Australia (in 2013 still 3699 students). This work forms part of PhD research at the University of Canberra by Ms Alison J. Childs.

Preliminary Findings: Alison J. Childs - December 2016

# Young Australian's Education and Employment Transitions

## MIGRANTS AND WELLBEING

Student achievement in 2003 as well as educational and vocational plans, and their family background is available from LSAY. Annual follow-ups provide a longitudinal dataset including information on their employment, and personal wellbeing until they were 25 in 2013. Nearly 80% of the young people were born in Australia, with both parents also born in Australia (described here as longer term Australians (aust)).

To compare individuals with a migrant background, my analysis distinguishes migrants from refugee source countries (ref) from non-refugee source countries (mig)<sup>1</sup>, and identifies whether they themselves were born overseas (1<sup>st</sup> gen), or at least one of their parents was born overseas (2<sup>nd</sup> gen). Four per cent were either first or second generation migrants from a refugee source country and 16% were either first or second generation migrants from non-refugee source countries.

## KEY FINDINGS<sup>2</sup>

### Secondary School Education

#### Academic Achievement – Age 15

Based on a combination of math, English, science literacy and problem solving, there is variation in academic achievement at age 15, with those from refugee source countries having a lower average score than their longer term Australia peers. First generation students from other migrant backgrounds have the highest average achievement at age 15. There is considerable variation within each migrant category.

#### Occupational Expectations

Compared with those who expected to work in Technical or Service roles, those expecting to be Professionals or Managers<sup>3</sup> had higher academic scores, higher socio-economic (SES) background (which includes parent education), were not from government schools, were female, and were from first or second generation migrant background (compared to longer term Australians).

#### Secondary School Attainment – by Age 20

In this survey there were very few early school leavers identified as migrants from refugee source countries who didn't complete their secondary school certificate. Proportionally, females from refugee source countries had the fewest early school leavers, with Australian males having the largest proportion within their category. Compared to the longer-term Australian students:

- students from each of the migrant groups were less likely to leave school before completing Year 12, and more likely to have obtained a tertiary entrance score (ATAR)
- young people from refugee source countries were much less likely (1/10<sup>th</sup>) to leave school early, even though had the lowest average academic achievement score at age 15

<sup>1</sup> Hugo et al.'s classification of refugee–humanitarian need entrants' source countries although not a perfect correspondence to identified visa class is considered robustly indicative, and incorporates family reunion visa class (2011, 2014): Appendix 1.

<sup>2</sup> Regression, reliability, factor analyses etc. provide the summary of significant results here. More information is available.

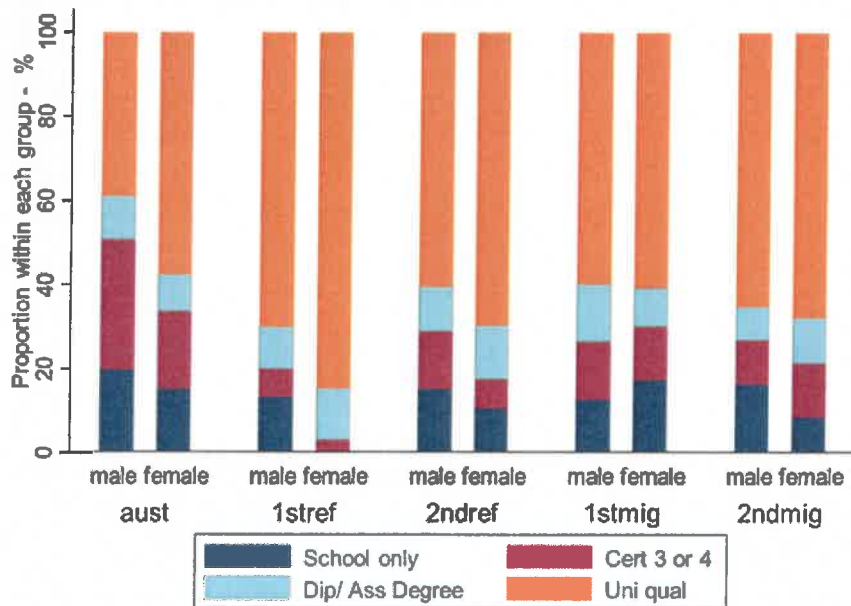


**Young Australian's Education and Employment Transitions**

**Highest education qualification attained – age 25**

Although academic achievement varied at age 15, when examining highest education qualification and controlling for other factors like SES, this achievement was neither more nor less likely associated with any qualification. Similar to the patterns for school attainment, the majority of young people from refugee source countries are completing tertiary qualifications, either university or Diploma or Associate degrees. Young women from refugee source countries have the highest proportion completing university studies, with Australian males the lowest proportion.

Compared to the university qualified and controlling for SES and career expectations, young people from each of the migrant groups were less likely than Australian students to only complete a school qualification or a vocational qualification (such as an apprenticeship). Longer term Australians were more likely to complete vocational education programs, such as Certificate 3 or 4 qualifications (eg. apprenticeships) if they were early school leavers, or only completed Year 12 without a university rank. Overall, women were half as likely as males to only complete a school qualification (controlling for other factors). Refer Figure 1.



**Figure 1.** Proportion of young people within each migrant group attaining each qualification – Age 25 (2013)

**Employment**

Employment at age 20 is a significant predictor for employment at age 25 (in 2013). Compared to the full-time employed, those who were not employed in 2008 were about **eight** times more likely not to be employed in 2013. Similarly, young people who were employed part-time in 2008 were two and a half times more likely to be in part-time employment in 2013, than the un-employed.

Additionally at age 25, having children was associated with a lower likelihood of employment of any kind across all groups. Compared to the full-time employed (FTE) (and controlling for having children), those not-employed were more likely to be:

- female; or
- in possession of only a school certificate, rather than a university qualification.

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Within all categories of migrants, compared to FTE males and longer term Australian's (who have the highest proportion of full-time employed) those least likely to be employed are female migrants. Comparing part-time employment to FTE, young people were more likely to be part-time employed if they were a:

- longer term Australian woman, or
- 2nd generation female migrant from a non-refugee source country.

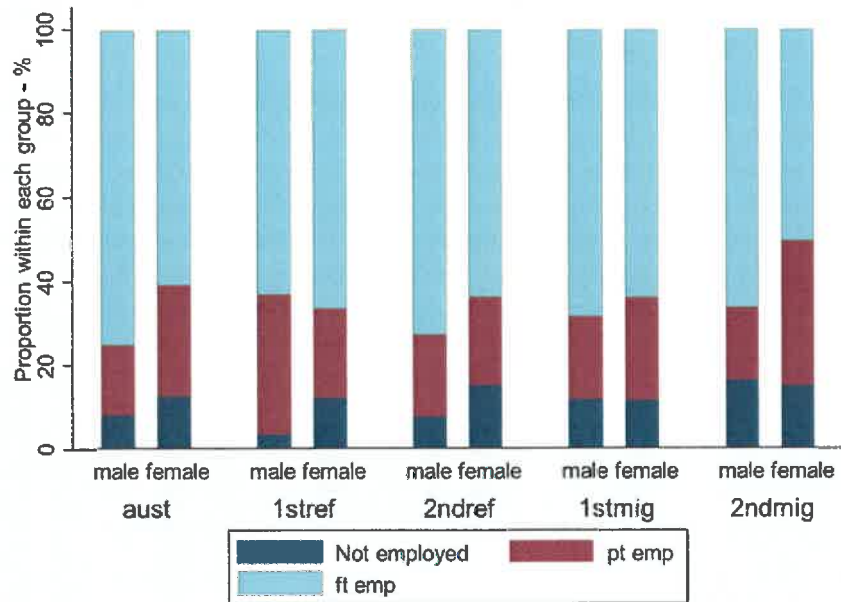


Figure 2. Proportion of young people within each migrant group in type of employment – Age 25 (2013)

**Linking education and employment together** Refer Figure 2. The pattern for employment appears quite different to educational outcomes: Completing an educational qualification after school is an advantage, but the type of post-school qualification does not have a clear association with employment. Males from refugee source countries didn't have significantly different employment outcomes to the longer-term Australian males. Completing further education does not appear to provide distinct employment advantages for women.

Another variable associated with employment is psychological distress, as measured by the Kessler 6<sup>ii</sup> scale. It was found to be a significant predictor (although having a small effect) of not being employed or being part-time employed. Psychological health is an important component of personal wellbeing and there are concerns about the mental health of young Australians. Additionally, it is an indicator of migrant settlement success<sup>iii</sup>. Further analysis revealed differences between groups.

## Wellbeing – Age 25

### Personal wellbeing:

In this work "a sustainable state of positive feelings and attitude, resilience, and satisfaction with self, relationships and experience..." reflects personal wellbeing. Within LSAY other variables predicting personal wellbeing include social support, and full-time employment. Predictors of psychological distress for young people aged 25 vary dependent on gender and migrant grouping.

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Controlling for general health, socio-economic status, education, employment and partner status, among young Australians - wellbeing differed by migrant status and gender (refer Figure 3):

- First-generation males from refugee source countries had the lowest level of psychological distress, therefore the best wellbeing
- First-generation females from refugee source countries had the highest level of psychological distress, therefore the poorest wellbeing.

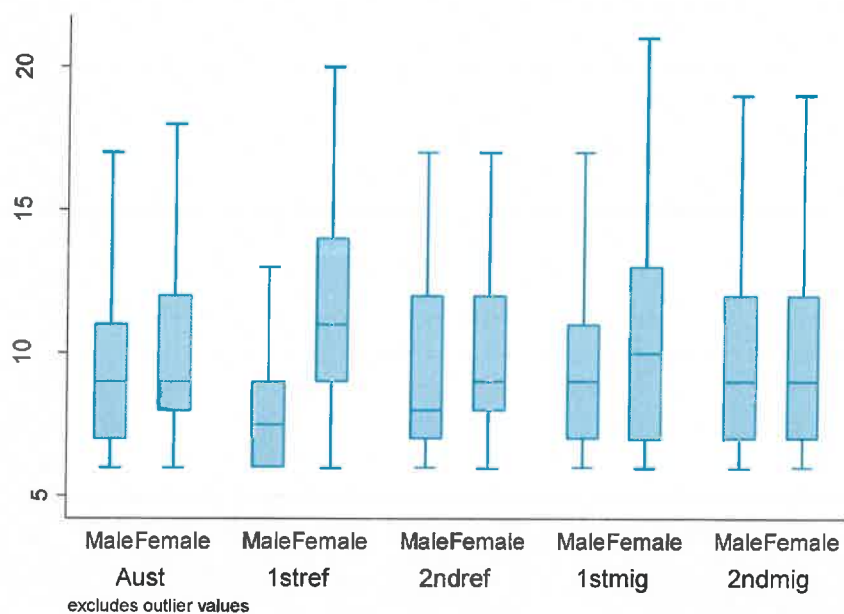


Figure 3. Box plot of psychological distress scores across migrant groups (median) - Age 25 (2013)

Main predictors of psychological distress include:

- poorer ratings of General Health (a self-report measure from 1 - Excellent to 5 - Poor)
- not being employed, particularly for 1st generation female migrants from refugee source countries
- being single
- being female; higher socio-economic status is a predictor for Australian females
- life dis-satisfaction , Unhappiness with their:
  - 'Career' (the work you do, your future, career prospects) is a consistent predictor
  - 'Social' situation (do in your spare time, get on with people, social life) is a stronger predictor for females rather than males
  - 'Home life' is a weaker predictor (life at home, standard of living, where you live) across the combined group, but is a strong predictor for 1<sup>st</sup> generation migrants – both males and females from refugee source countries.

Education effects vary across migrant groupings and gender. For Australian males, and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation female migrants from refugee source countries, in comparison to the university group, not having a university qualification is associated with positive psychological health, eg Cert 3 or 4 (eg. apprenticeships). Refer Appendix 2.

**Acknowledgement:** Australian Data Archive: Longitudinal Survey of Australian Youth: National Centre for Vocational Education Research: au.edu.anu.ada.ddi.01111, Stata 14.0 analysis.

## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1:

**Source Countries of Origin: Birthplace and ancestry** - Refugee-humanitarian birthplace groups by arrival date: Adapted from Hugo et al., 2011, p. 55: Table 2.1 reproduced with permission (2011, 2014)

#### GROUPS ARRIVING 1960/1970'S

- Chile
- Czech Republic

#### GROUPS ARRIVING 1980/1990'S

- Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Cambodia
- Croatia
- Timor Leste
- El Salvador
- Laos
- Lebanon

#### RECENT ARRIVALS

- Afghanistan
- Myanmar (Burma)
- Burundi
- Congo
- Eritrea
- Iran
- Liberia
- Somalia
- Sri Lanka
- Sudan
- Ethiopia
- Iraq
- Sierra Leone

### Appendix 2:

**Summary of Psychological Distress regression analyses indicating significant predictors<sup>ii</sup>**

Psych. Distress	Aust male	Aust female	1stref male(a)	1stref fem(b)	2ndref male	2ndref female	1stmig male	1stmig female	2ndmig male	2ndmig female
Total (n)	1441	1460	30	33	66	86	137	156	161	127
missing <sup>ii</sup>	107	94	2	1	5	6	8	8	16	5
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup> -Linear/BootStrap%	27/28	31/32	36/34	59/29	45/42	43/35	38/40	41/36	28/31	38/31
<b>General Health</b>	***	***				***	***	***		
<b>Life Satis'n</b>	***	***			***		***	**		***
Career									**	
Social		***					***			
Home life			***	***						
<b>SES</b>		**								
<b>Employed</b>			(a)							
FT empl'd (ref)										
Not emp'd	***	**		***						
PT emp'd									*	
<b>Ed. Qual'n</b>				(b)						
Uni qual'n (ref)										
School only	* -ve	*								
Cert 3 or 4	*** -ve		**			** -ve				
Dip/ Ass Degree						*** -ve				*
<b>Demographics</b>										
Single										

<sup>i</sup>Note: (a) and (b) – collapsed categories due to single observations, \*p<0.05, \*\*p<0.01, \*\*\* p<0.001, LSAY03: Wave 11: Age 2

<sup>i</sup> Identified through the International Standard Classifications of Occupations (ISCO-88, ILO)

<sup>ii</sup> Kessler 6 scale is a brief self-report measure of non-specific psychological distress relating to recent nervousness, hopelessness, restlessness, sadness, loss of energy and worthlessness. It is used broadly in Australia and overseas (Kessler et al. 2010). Scored from 6 to 30, scores over 19 indicate likely significant mental health concerns.

<sup>iii</sup> For example: the Australian Government – Department of Social Services (DSS) "...works to improve the lifetime wellbeing of migrants and refugees settling in Australia by responding to their specific needs, encouraging their independence and participation..." (DSS, 2016).

Young Australian's Education and Employment Transitions

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