From the ‘resistant’ to the ‘champions’ Community attitudes during the first four years of refugee settlement in Armidale, NSW

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From the ‘resistant’ to the ‘champions’: Community attitudes during the first four years of refugee settlement in Armidale, NSW

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Contents

Key Messages

Armidale, NSW, is Australia's newest regional settlement location, with around 600 Ezidi refugees settling there from early 2018 onwards.

Successful settlement and integration involve mutual adaptation by the host community and newcomers, and initiatives that work with the spectrum of community attitudes and concerns.

When Armidale was designated as a new settlement location in 2017, many community members responded positively. However, community concerns were also evident.

The University of New England (UNE), in partnership with SSI, initiated research to empirically gauge community attitudes to refugees in Armidale. The research monitored host community attitudes and responses during the first four years of settlement.

Six "pulse" (cross-sectional) surveys each drew a new sample of 200 Armidale residents and examined trends over time at the community level. Re-interviews with 312 participants (longitudinal surveys) examined changes in attitudes at the individual level.

Comparisons with data from a national survey suggested that Armidale was reasonably representative of inner regional cities in terms of its socio-demographics and attitudes towards immigration and multiculturalism.

Over time, the cross-sectional surveys revealed decreased concern about the impact of refugees on Armidale, increased contact with the refugees, and increasingly positive attitudes towards them.

In particular, concern about jobs and resources decreased during the study period, with increased considerations about contact with the refugees and their integration. The great majority of contact experiences with the refugees were positive, and participants attributed the success of these experiences to positive characteristics of the Ezidis such as being "friendly" or "nice".

Community segmentation analyses identified four distinct clusters of attitudes. The exact segmentation changed over time, reflecting increasingly positive attitudes to the refugees. Cluster profiles were used by settlement agencies and other services to understand and respond to the range and scope of attitudes within the community.

The longitudinal surveys corroborated the results of the cross-sectional surveys, revealing more positive attitudes within individuals over time. On average, people who started with positive attitudes remained positive, while those with more negative attitudes became more positive over time.

The study occurred during a time of disruption to the Armidale community through the impact of a severe drought followed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Attitudes to the refugees nonetheless became increasingly positive, a result that speaks to the hard work of many people and organisations, and the efforts and strengths of Ezidis to settle as they start a new chapter of their lives in Armidale.

From an applied point of view, the research provided regular insights to SSI and others on the concerns and hopes of different segments of the Armidale community in the evolving two-way process where refugees and the host community adapt to one another and become entwined in the fabric of the local community life.

Executive Summary

Using a social psychology framework, this report presents a detailed study of a regional community's attitudes to refugees during the first four years of a new regional refugee settlement location from early 2018. The study was conducted in Armidale, NSW, as Ezidi refugees settled in the community. Six "pulse" surveys drew a new sample of approximately 200 Armidale residents in each survey, allowing us to observe sentiment towards the newcomers at a community level at these different time points. Three hundred and twelve participants were also re-interviewed, allowing us to track changes at an individual level. The results provide information and insights about the process of refugee settlement and integration in a regional community.

The settlement of Ezidis in Armidale was an important step in Australia's refugee settlement plan and reflected impetus from government and regional communities for increased refugee settlement outside Australia's major cities. In 2018, Armidale was the first new regional settlement location in 11 years under the Australian Government's Humanitarian Program. As a new regional settlement region, it represented a test case for the regional settlement of refugees.

Armidale was selected for refugee settlement as a "welcoming community" that was well placed to receive refugees. Our first question was therefore whether Armidale was uniquely welcoming and positive towards refugees. Comparison with data collected in other inner regional Australia locations in national Mapping Social Cohesion (MSC) surveys did not support this. Armidale was a little lower on social cohesion and acceptance of multiculturalism than the MSC data on several indicators, leading us to conclude that Armidale was most likely not a special case of a highly welcoming community.

At the community level, there were changes in Armidale's attitudes during the study period. Attitudes to the refugees became more positive, and level of concern about the impact of refugee settlement on Armidale decreased. The reasons for level of concern moved from a focus on jobs and resources towards a focus on integration and contact experiences with the refugees. On a personal level, more participants experienced benefits of the refugees settling than those who experienced disadvantages.

Over time, participants' amount of contact with the refugees increased and was rated more positively, which participants tended to attribute to positive features of the refugees, such as how friendly or nice they were, rather than to other contextual features. Attitudes were more positive when the Ezidis were perceived to adopt Australian ways. Indeed, concerns increased when participants perceived an excess of culture maintenance compared with their acculturation preferences.

Audience segmentation was used to identify four clusters of attitudes within the community which could then be characterised in terms of their demographics and other variables. The clusters were initially named "Resistant", "Concerned", "Positive" and "Enthusiastic". However, in Survey 3 the "Resistant" and "Concerned" clusters merged into one group and an extremely positive cluster ("Champions") appeared. By Survey 6, the "Resistant/Concerned cluster" was renamed "Cautious" to reflect that the average attitude of this group was no longer negative. In this way, the audience segmentation reflected Armidale's increasing positivity to the refugees. The audience segmentation has practical implications for which groups may be amenable to further information or interventions to smooth their relations with the newcomers and proved useful early in the settlement process.

In addition to the "pulse" or "cross-sectional" samples, we re-interviewed participants in three "longitudinal" surveys. Reflecting the results of the cross-sectional surveys, the longitudinal surveys found that, on average, individuals' level of concern about the impact of refugees on Armidale reduced over time, their attitudes became increasingly positive, and their estimates of others' attitudes also became more positive. More fine-grained analysis revealed that the average effect for level of concern and own attitude was driven by positive changes in

people whose initial attitudes to the refugees were negative. That is, people who started out positive remained positive, and people who started out negative became more positive.

Also consistent with the cross-sectional results, the longitudinal results showed increasing amount of contact with the refugees. However, the valence of contact remained at the same (positive) level. It seems that while the community's overall contact valence trended upwards across the surveys, this change did not occur within individuals.

Together these surveys provide evidence for positive changes in attitudes to the refugee settlement program and the refugees themselves during the first four years of settlement. The consistent results between the cross-sectional and longitudinal surveys add strength to the conclusion that attitudes to the refugees and the refugee settlement program became more positive during the first four years of settlement. Furthermore, there were indications of broad scope attitudinal changes as increased multicultural attitudes were found over time.

We should note that while contact with the refugees increased, the average amount of contact remained modest. The study period corresponded with many challenges to regional NSW with a deep drought in 2017-2019 immediately followed by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. Despite these challenges, the overall community attitude to the refugees remained positive and scapegoating of the refugees for the various community woes did not appear to be present.

The success of the settlement program to this date speaks to the work of many people and organisations and to the efforts and contributions Ezidis themselves. There are unanswered questions regarding what will happen in the future. The settlement program is on a good trajectory, but this requires ongoing support. Further monitoring would be invaluable to identify longer term outcomes of refugee settlement in this regional location.

Introduction

In Australia, there is considerable impetus from government and regional communities for increased settlement of refugees outside Australia's major cities. Over many years, the level of regional settlement of refugees increased at a slow, steady pace (see Appendix 1). This rate increased sharply over recent years, with more than 20% of refugees settling in regional locations of Australia in 2018-19. By "regional settlement", we refer to locations that are not in Australia's state/territory capitals or major urban centres.[1]

There have been many studies of refugees in Australia and their settlement in Australia's major centres and regional communities. However, the existing research has, understandably, mainly focused on refugees and sometimes on social and economic outcomes for the communities. Few Australian studies have closely examined the host community's attitudes to refugees. Yet, refugee settlement is a two-way process in which refugees and the host community must adapt to one another, with the host community's attitudes forming an important contextual element of refugee settlement.[2] The well-being of both is entwined as refugees become part of the fabric of the host community.

Most studies of regional refugee settlement comment on the importance of 'accepting communities' and some qualitative studies have conducted interviews with selected community members. But apart from the research we present here, to our knowledge no Australian studies have systematically collected quantitative data on regional host community attitudes to refugee settlement. This report sheds light on the attitudes to refugees by the broader community in a regional location.

We present a fine-grained study of community attitudes to refugee settlement in Armidale, NSW. Drawing on recent developments in intergroup contact and acculturation theories, we conducted six waves of surveys during the first four years of refugees settling in the town from 2018–2021. During this time, approximately 650 Ezidi[3] refugees, mostly from Iraq, incrementally arrived and settled in Armidale, a city of 23,352 (2016 Census), increasing the Armidale population by 2.8%. Each survey selected a random sample of approximately 200 Armidale residents to gauge their attitudes to the refugees settling; a total of 1,191 interviews.[4] In Surveys 4, 5 and 6, we also re-interviewed 312 Armidale residents to examine changes in their sentiment to the refugee settlement program.

Settlement context

Many regional communities are keen to receive refugees, both for humanitarian reasons and for the revitalisation that refugee settlement can inject into the community. Armidale, NSW, has been one such community.

Armidale is located on traditional lands of the Anaiwan people, in the New England region of New South Wales. It is mid-way between Sydney and Brisbane, which are both about 500 km away, and is a sheep and beef farming region. It is home to a well-established university, the University of New England. Because of the presence of a university, this relatively small inland town is sometimes characterised as "town and gown."

For many years, Armidale community members campaigned to bring refugees to Armidale. Residents advocated for refugees through churches and community groups such as Armidale Sanctuary. From 2003 to 2009, Armidale Sanctuary successfully proposed and settled approximately 60 refugees under the Special Humanitarian Program.

Two individuals[5] played a particularly prominent role in lobbying the local council and state and federal politicians for Armidale to receive and settle refugees. In 2005, the Council unanimously declared Armidale to be a "Refugee Welcome Zone." The lobbying of local councillors and state and federal politicians continued, and in 2017 the council voted to apply to settle Syrian and Iraqi refugees in the area. In August 2017, after representations to the Federal government and local politicians and advocacy from others, including SSI, Armidale was declared a new regional settlement location for refugees. The first refugees arrived in early 2018.

The establishment of Armidale as a new refugee settlement area was significant in the broader Australian context. Armidale was Australia's first new refugee settlement location under the Humanitarian

[1] We note that the Australian Government targets for regional settlement include some major urban centres.

[2] Brown, R., & Zagefka, H. (2011). The dynamics of acculturation: An intergroup perspective. In *Advances in experimental social psychology* (Vol. 44, pp. 129-184). Academic Press.

[3] The refugees settled in Armidale are individuals and families from the Ezidi minority (also known as Yazidi) community who are indigenous to parts of Iraq, Syria and Turkey.

[4] The final sample was a little smaller as some participants were found not to be Armidale residents.

[5] Jeff Siegel and Robin Jones

Program to be declared in 11 years. As a new regional refugee settlement region, it represented a test case for the regional settlement of refugees and the delivery of on-arrival support under the Humanitarian Settlement Program (HSP).[6] The HSP is currently delivered by five providers across Australia and is delivered by SSI in the regional parts of NSW that include Armidale. Refugees transition from the HSP to the Settlement and Engagement Transition Support (SETS) program which, in Armidale, is delivered by Mosaic Multicultural Connections.

Part of the rationale for sending refugees to Armidale was that it was a "welcoming community." For example, as shown in Appendix 2, a media release declaring the new settlement region (11th August 2017) explained that Armidale was selected as a "community-driven" regional settlement location for refugees that has "a strong, welcoming community demonstrated by the fact that this push for the city to be a settlement location for refugees was driven by the community itself."

However, locally the push for refugees to come to Armidale came from a few individuals and groups. Immediately after the media release there were many positive responses, with individuals expressing enthusiasm and wanting to help the refugees via donations and voluntary activities. However, there was also a flurry of comments on a "Thumbs up, Thumbs down" Facebook page in which very negative attitudes were expressed and Armidale Regional Council fielded phone calls from people who were concerned about this development and its potential impact on the town. Given the mixed response to the refugee settlement program, there was a risk of backlash in some sections of the community, with the potential to cause angst and negativity to the refugees.

[6] The HSP provides initial settlement support to families and individuals who have been granted a permanent visa under Australia's Humanitarian Program and is one of the Australian Government's main mechanisms for on-arrival support and linkages to refugees.

Theory background: Intergroup relations and acculturation theory

Contact theory

Seventy years of empirical research in social psychology has shown that the contact a person and their extended circle (such as friends and family members) has with individual members of a group influences their feelings towards that group and contributes to increased social integration and cohesion.[7] Therefore, we expected the contact between Ezidis and other Armidale residents to be of great importance. Research has found that positive contact experiences are typically much more frequent than negative contact and have a positive effect on attitudes.[8,9] Negative contact experiences are rarer but can have stronger impact on people's attitudes,[10] especially if there are negative expectations to start with.[11] Because of the stronger effect of these rare negative experiences, small unfortunate events such as playground conflict can have significant ripple effects. In this way, ordinary events in a community can escalate and shape people's broader attitudes and intergroup relations, potentially impacting attitudes towards refugees and the refugee settlement program.

Acculturation theory

Berry and Sam (1997)[12] identified two acculturation dimensions of how much the newcomer maintains their original culture and how much they engage with the host culture. The combination of these dimensions describes different ways in which

[7] Pettigrew, T. F., & Tropp, L. R. (2006). A meta-analytic test of intergroup contact theory. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 90(5), 751-783.

[8] Graf, S., Paolini, S., & Rubin, M. (2014). Negative intergroup contact is more influential, but positive intergroup contact is more common: Assessing contact prominence and contact prevalence in five Central European countries. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 44(6), 536-547.

[9] Schäfer, S. J., Kauff, M., Prati, F., Kros, M., Lang, T., & Christ, O. (2021). Does negative contact undermine attempts to improve intergroup relations? Deepening the understanding of negative contact and its consequences for intergroup contact research and interventions. *Journal of Social Issues, 77*(1), 197-216.

[10] Barlow, F. K., et al. (2012). "The contact caveat: Negative contact predicts increased prejudice more than positive contact predicts reduced prejudice." *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin 38*(12): 1629-1643.

[11] Paolini, S., & McIntyre, K. (2019). Bad Is stronger than good for stigmatized, but not admired outgroups: Meta-analytical tests of intergroup valence asymmetry in individual-to-group generalization experiments. *Personality and Social Psychology Review, 23*(1), 3–47.

[12] Berry, J. W., & Sam, D. L. (1997). Acculturation and adaptation. *Handbook of cross-cultural psychology*, 3(2), 291-326.

newcomers acculturate to their newly adopted home. However, host community members also have expectations and preferences for how newcomers should acculturate. The Interactive Acculturation Model[13] predicts that the match or mismatch between newcomers' acculturation strategy and host acculturation preferences is important as a mismatch can cause dissatisfaction and conflict.

Threat theory

Community attitudes to newcomers - migrants or refugees - can also reflect whether there is a perception of threat.[14] 'Realistic threats' refer to threats to material welfare, such as perceived competition for jobs and resources. 'Symbolic threats' refer to perceived group differences in morals, values, standards, beliefs, and attitudes. For example, some Australians dislike the hijab, a head covering worn by some women for religious or cultural reasons, as they take it as a symbol of inequality between men and women. The extant research suggests that perceived threats can instigate negative dynamics between distinct social groups in society. Conversely, perceived benefits of immigration should have a positive influence on attitudes.

During the study period, Armidale experienced several upheavals. A major drought during 2017-2019 had economic consequences[15] for this farming region and led to strict water restrictions. The drought ended at the beginning of 2020, just two months before the COVID-19 pandemic was declared by WHO, with lockdowns and further economic impacts. Australia's offshore Humanitarian Program was reduced to a trickle after March 2020.

Purpose of the current research

When the refugee settlement program was announced, researchers at the University of New England proposed a community monitoring program to track the community's attitudes during the first few years of refugees settling in Armidale and a collaboration was established with SSI. The monitoring was intended as an "early warning system" if negative feelings about the refugees developed within the community, to enable stakeholders to respond to issues as they arose. As the HSP provider in Armidale, SSI was acutely aware of balancing the needs of newly arriving refugees with the local community needs and resources. The data collection was carried out over time so that the effects of contact and perceived threats and benefits could express themselves as more contact occurred and as different threats and benefits became apparent. The survey results were communicated regularly to SSI and other stakeholders and assisted in this process.

We expected attitudes to the refugees to differ across different segments of the community. As mentioned above, some members of the Armidale community advocated refugee settlement in the town, whereas others were concerned by this development. These might represent two different "segments" of the Armidale community. By "segments" we refer to people who have similar needs, values, or characteristics and are distinct from other groups in the community. For example, the refugee advocates and those who were concerned about the refugees coming might represent two segments in the community who would have quite different initial attitudes towards and expectations of the refugees to each other. These initial attitudes/expectations would likely influence their subsequent attitudes and behaviours towards the refugees. We can expect the community to comprise more than just two segments; after all, a community is a diverse place filled with diverse opinions. We sought to capture that diversity using "audience segmentation" in which the statistical technique of cluster analysis was used to identify groups of like-minded people and distinguish them from others with differing views.

An important question in this research was the extent to which Armidale can be considered unique. The discourse concerning Armidale was that it is a 'special' town: highly educated due to the existence of the university, multicultural, open to new arrivals,

[13] Bourhis, R. Y., Moise, L. C., Perreault, S., & Senecal, S. (1997). Towards an interactive acculturation model: A social psychological approach. *International Journal of Psychology, 32*(6), 369-386.

[14] Stephan, W., G., Renfro, C. L., Esses, V. M., Stephan, C. W., & Martin, T. (2005). The effects of feeling threatened on attitudes toward immigrants. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 29*(1), 1-19.

[15] For example, see https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-11-04/armidale-residents-donate-water-to-save-trees-in-drought/11661872

with good employment opportunities and services, making it an ideal location for refugee settlement. We sought to determine if at the onset Armidale was uniquely placed to receive refugees, or whether Armidale can be regarded as typical of inner regional towns[16] such that its experience could potentially be repeated in other regional locations.

In summary, the Armidale community monitoring research aimed to:

- **Understand Armidale's attitudes to refugees and multiculturalism**
- **Provide an analysis of trends over time and with a special focus on contact, acculturation, and threat perception**
- **Identify different segments of the community in terms of their attitudes to the refugees and examine changes in the community profile over time**
- **Compare Armidale with other "inner regional" areas of Australia on key indicators**

Methodology

As shown on the timeline below, six surveys were conducted during the first four years of settlement, with three surveys in the first year (April 2018, September 2018, and February 2019) followed by annual surveys in October 2019, November 2020, and November 2021. All surveys were conducted with the approval of the University of New England's Human Research Ethics Committee. Myriad Research, a Hobart-based market research company, was commissioned to collect the data. This helped to ensure the anonymity of respondents in this relatively close-knit community.

Each survey sampled approximately 200 adult community members via a telephone survey using randomly dialled telephone numbers from a list of mobile and landline numbers connected with Armidale, providing a "snapshot" of Armidale attitudes at the time. Participants were invited to "an important community survey on behalf of Dr Sue Watt from the University of New England" which "has the support of the Armidale Regional Council."[17] A new sample was drawn each time, providing "cross-sectional" samples. Telephone surveys were used to maximise the chances of obtaining a representative sample as most people have a phone that could be included in the random dialling list.

There was very high participation in the study, with more than 85% of people contacted in each survey agreeing to the telephone interview. Some respondents were not living in Armidale. Only Armidale residents were included in the final analyses. The high response rates increase confidence that the samples were representative of the broader community. The sampling error range was computed at 3% to 7% (95% confidence interval), meaning that the survey results should be within 7% of the "real" number that would be obtained if we interviewed the entire Armidale population.

The survey participants were asked if they were willing to be re-interviewed in the future. Those who indicated "Yes" were contacted in Surveys 4, 5, and 6 and invited to be re-interviewed. This provided a "longitudinal" sample of 312 people who each completed at least two interviews and were resident in Armidale.

[16] Inner regional Australia is identified by Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS) = 2

[17] This part was removed in Surveys 5 and 6 as our contact at the Council had moved to another employer.

Figure 1: Study timeline

April 2018	**Baseline Survey (S1)** *N* = 195 91% agreement rate from 1/6 connected calls (includes call backs and answering machines).	*First refugees had recently arrived, but little mixing in the community.*
Sept 2018	**Survey 2 (S2)** *N* = 162 91% agreement rate from 1/6 connected calls.	*170 Ezidi refugees had arrived, visible in the community but had not yet started mixing with the community*
Feb 2019	**Survey 3 (S3)** *N* = 177 85% agreement rate from 1/8 connected calls.	*About 294 Ezidis were present in Armidale, with more mixing and more language capacity.*
Oct 2019	**Survey 4 (S4)** *N* =187 92% agreement rate from 1/11 connected calls **Longitudinal Survey** *N* = 142 98% take-up.	*About 500 Ezidis in Armidale. Plenty of contact now occurring.*
Nov-Dec 2020	**Survey 5 (S5)** *N* =195 92% agreement rate from 1/11 connected calls **Longitudinal Survey** *N* = 157 97% take-up	*About 650 Ezidis in Armidale. No new arrivals after March 2020 due to COVID19.*
Nov-Dec 2021	**Survey 6 (S6)** *N* =162 **Longitudinal Survey** *N* = 153	*About 650 Ezidis in Armidale. No new arrivals after March 2020 due to COVID19.*

Sample characteristics

The purpose in conducting random dialling telephone interviews was to obtain as representative a sample as possible. We included several demographic measures to check whether the samples varied significantly across the surveys and to compare our sample demographics with the latest census figures (2016) for the Armidale postcode (2350) and the 2016/2017 Mapping Social Cohesion data for inner regional Australia (ASGS code = 2, $N = 286$).[18] The comparison with "Inner regional Australia" was used as this is the same geographic code as Armidale. Since 2007, the Mapping Social Cohesion survey (https://scanloninstitute.org.au/research/mapping-social-cohesion) annually draws a random sample of people distributed throughout Australia to gauge community sentiment towards social cohesion, immigration and population issues. The demographics were also used to profile the community segments (see "Community Attitudes Segmentation" below), which identified patterns of attitudes to the refugees.

Given the very high response rates to the telephone interviews, we expected the sample to be representative of the Armidale population. As shown in Appendix 3, our samples showed some differences with the Armidale census data. Compared with the census, our participants were similar in terms of sex. However, they were a little older than the census, with a difference in median age of 7-11 years at Baseline.[19] Our participants were also more likely to have a university degree, a little less likely to be in full-time employment and a little less likely to be a migrant or come from a migrant family. Nonetheless, there was good variability in the data, showing that a diverse sample was recruited.

Several demographic indicators could be compared with Mapping Social Cohesion participants including migrant status, Australian citizenship, highest level of education completed, employment situation, financial circumstances, and age. The demographics of the Armidale samples were in line with Mapping Social Cohesion on all but two of these indicators (see Appendix 3). In employment status, Armidale residents were less likely to be unemployed and more likely to be retired than Mapping Social Cohesion participants. In financial circumstances, Armidale residents were more likely to describe themselves as "living comfortably" than Mapping Social Cohesion participants, indicating, on average, higher feelings of prosperity in Armidale. The average level of education was not higher in Armidale when compared with Mapping Social Cohesion participants.[20] However, a more detailed view of the education statistics revealed that more Armidale participants had a post-graduate degree (18%) than Mapping Social Cohesion participants (11%), and fewer Armidale residents had trade qualifications (2%) than Mapping Social Cohesion participants (9%).

We used a very similar sampling methodology (random dialling telephone surveys) to Mapping Social Cohesion, which may explain the greater similarity to the Mapping Social Cohesion demographics than to the census demographics. Furthermore, the 2350 postcode from which the census data were drawn includes a large area that extends well beyond the town of Armidale. Hence, not all census participants lived in Armidale town, whereas all our survey participants did. Together, when considering the representativeness of this sample against the census statistics, we should think of this sample as being a little older and somewhat more educated than the broader community. When comparing this sample with the 2016 Mapping Social Cohesion data, we can think of it as being quite similar.

[18] The number of inner regional participants in the Mapping Social Cohesion surveys was small, with just 286 in 2016 and 300 in 2017 to represent all inner regional Australia. We therefore combined the 2016 and 2017 Mapping Social Cohesion samples to increase size and reduce sampling error.

[19] The census data were reported in clusters of five years (15-19, 20-24, 25-29, etc.). We only interviewed adults aged 18 years onwards. For comparability with the census data, we computed the median from age 20 onward in our sample and in the census data.

[20] Mann-Whitney U, $p = .11$

Survey instrument

The questionnaire comprised eight sections that targeted the following broad areas. Each scale was necessarily brief due to the limited time of 15 minutes for each telephone interview:

- A • **Social cohesion and multiculturalism**
- B • **Attitudes towards immigration**
- C • **Level of concern and attitudes regarding the refugees coming to Armidale**
- D • **Behavioural tendencies and contact**
- E • **Benefits and disadvantages of refugee settlement**
- F • **Perceptions of refugees' culture adoption and maintenance**
- G • **Demographics**
- H • **COVID-19 concern (control variable). This control variable revealed no effects of note and for the sake of brevity is not included in this report.**

The questionnaire items together with their response options and source can be seen in Appendix 4.

It was important to determine to what extent Armidale was similar or different to Inner Regional Australia more generally on key indicators of social cohesion and multiculturalism. To this end, we included items from the 2016 Mapping Social Cohesion survey and compared Armidale at Baseline (Survey 1) with inner regional Australia participants in the 2016 and 2017 Mapping Social Cohesion surveys combined.

Below, we present results for the repeated cross-sectional surveys of the Armidale community, which each drew a new sample of about 200. For each indicator, we examine trends across time (showing aggregate change over time) and, where possible, we compare the Armidale results at Baseline (Survey 1) with the inner regional respondents from the 2016/2017 Mapping Social Cohesion surveys.

Where a result is described as "significant" we mean that it is statistically significant, representing a level of change that is above chance level. Before running tests of statistical significance, we checked whether the data met the test assumptions. In some cases, the data did not meet the assumption of a "normal distribution", in which case we used tests that did not assume a normal distribution (non-parametric tests) where available.

Results

Social cohesion and multiculturalism

Armidale participants and Mapping Social Cohesion participants both showed very high levels of pride and belonging in Australia. Armidale residents did not have significantly more pride in the Australian way of life and culture than Mapping Social Cohesion participants,[21] but they did have slightly (and significantly) more sense of belonging in Australia.[22]

Despite the strong ratings of belonging, Armidale residents did not rate their community particularly highly on indicators of community cohesion (willing to help neighbours, people of different backgrounds get on well together, able to have a real say on issues). They also scored significantly lower than the Mapping Social Cohesion participants on each of these measures.[23] Nonetheless, the experience of discrimination among Armidale residents was not different from other inner regional participants. Armidale residents had similar immigration attitudes to Mapping Social Cohesion participants, with both samples showing satisfaction with Australia's immigrant intake and some desire for immigrants to change their behaviour to be more like Australians. However, Armidale residents were more likely to think that we should do more to learn about the different ethnic/cultural groups in Australia.[24]

Table 1:
Comparison of Armidale Residents at Baseline with Mapping Social Cohesion Inner Regional Australia Participants, 2016/2017.

	Armidale Baseline (Survey 1) Average (std dev)	Mapping Social Cohesion 2016/2017 Average (std dev)
I take pride in the Australian way of life and culture (1-4 scale)	3.56 (.67)	3.50 (.66)
I have a sense of belonging in Australia (1-4 scale)	3.77 (.54)	3.68 (.57)
People in my local area are willing to help their neighbours (1-5 scale)	3.86 (1.02)	4.16 (.97)
I am able to have a real say on issues that are important to me in my local area (1-5 scale)	3.14 (1.19)	3.55 (1.18)
My local area is place where people from different national or ethnic backgrounds get on well together (1-5 scale)	3.59 (1.12)	3.39 (.97)
Experienced discrimination because of your skin colour, ethnic origin or religion over the past 12 months (%)	16.2%	12.1%
What do you think of the number of immigrants accepted into Australia at present… would you say it is too high, about right, too low, no opinion? (1-3 scale)	1.84 (.76)	1.76 (.72)
We should do more to learn about the customs and heritage of different ethnic and cultural groups in this country (1-5 scale)	3.66 (1.25)	3.30 (1.34)
People who come to Australia should change their behaviour to be more like Australians (1-5 scale)	3.40 (1.30)	3.56 (1.31)

[21] Mann-Whitney U, $p = .14$

[22] Mann-Whitney U, $p = .01$

[23] T-tests, $p < .001$ for "willing to help" and "real say", and $p = .003$ for "get on well together."

[24] Mann-Whitney U, $p = .002$

Changes in social cohesion and multicultural attitudes during the study period

Here, we examine whether the successive surveys showed changes at the community level in social cohesion and multicultural attitudes. The average and standard deviation for each measure in each survey are shown in Table 2.

Pride and belonging

The high levels of pride and belonging in Australia mentioned above did not change significantly from Surveys 1-4.[25] Therefore, these measures were not assessed further. The same applied to sense of belonging locally in Armidale and experience of discrimination.

Participants' sense of local belonging in Armidale was significantly lower than their sense of belonging in Australia,[26] but the overall average of 3.5 on the 1-4 scale nonetheless represented a very strong sense of local belonging in Armidale.

Social cohesion

The sense that people in the local area are willing to help their neighbours and ratings of being able to have a "real say" in community issues varied significantly across the surveys, but neither was significantly different when we compared Surveys 1 and 6, meaning there was no evidence of an overall upward or downward trend in these indicators.

Multiculturalism

On the other hand, the three multiculturalism measures all showed significant positive changes during the study period. That is, ratings of the neighbourhood as a place where people from different national or ethnic backgrounds get on well together were significantly higher in Survey 6 than Survey 1, as were ratings that we should learn more about the customs and heritage of different ethnic and cultural groups in this country. The opinion that people who come to Australia should change their behaviour to be more like Australians decreased from Surveys 1-6.[27]

Two items measured the desire to mix with members of other ethnic/cultural groups. Analysis showed that the "desire to mix" scores did not vary significantly between the surveys.[28] The overall average of 3.64 (std dev = 1.01) indicated a response that was approximately halfway between "neither agree nor disagree" and "agree" on the 1-5 scale.

Table 2:
Ratings of Community Cohesion and Multicultural Attitudes in Surveys 1 to 6.

	Survey Average (std dev)					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
People in my local area are willing to help their neighbours (1-5 scale)	3.86 (1.02)	3.85 (1.11)	4.02 (.94)	3.77 (.95)	3.99 (.93)	4.04 (.90)
I am able to have a real say on issues that are important to me in my local area (1-5 scale)	3.14 (1.19)	3.23 (1.22)	3.43 (1.11)	3.24 (1.17)	2.94 (1.22)	3.18 (1.22)
My local area is a place where people from different national or ethnic backgrounds get on well together (1-5 scale)	3.59 (1.12)	3.62 (1.01)	3.82 (.92)	3.71 (1.04)	3.88 (.97)	3.77 (.82)
We should do more to learn about the customs and heritage of different ethnic and cultural groups in this country (1-5 scale)	3.66 (1.25)	3.72 (1.25)	3.85 (1.17)	3.97 (1.18)	3.83 (1.16)	4.02 (1.05)
People who come to Australia should change their behaviour to be more like Australians (1-5 scale)	3.40 (1.30)	3.22 (1.37)	3.31 (1.22)	3.30 (1.27)	3.04 (1.37)	3.02 (1.29)
Desire to mix with members of other ethnic/cultural groups (1-5 scale)	3.57 (1.04)	3.60 (1.08)	3.67 (.99)	3.61 (1.10)	3.75 (.93)	3.66 (.92)

[25] Kruskal-Wallis p(pride) = .979 and p(belonging) = .308

[26] Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test, $p < .001$

[27] These two items were not quite the same in the Mapping Social Cohesion questionnaire, so comparison with inner regional Australia generally was not possible.

[28] ANOVA (between groups overall effect), $p = .524$, (linear trend) $p = .164$

Summary

In a nutshell, the results do not indicate that Armidale was an exceptionally welcoming community when the refugees started to arrive. Armidale residents were high in national pride and belonging at a national and local level. While high pride was similar to other inner regional locations, Armidale residents felt a higher sense of belonging in Australia than Mapping Social Cohesion participants. The broader literature finds that national pride and belonging to correlate with higher, not lower, prejudice to minority groups.[29] Armidale was not particularly high on community cohesion measures but showed some positivity towards mixing with members of other ethnic/cultural groups. On some variables, Armidale residents showed less community cohesion and acceptance of multiculturalism than other inner regional Australians. The level of discrimination experienced in Armidale was not different to inner Australia generally.

While the indicators of social cohesion did not change significantly from Surveys 1-6, it is encouraging that all three indicators of multiculturalism showed positive changes during the time that Ezidis were settling in Armidale. From an applied point of view, the fact that Armidale was not exceptional when compared with other inner regional cities suggests that positive dynamics during settlement such as those observed in Armidale are possible when multiculturalism and openness to other cultures are not extraordinarily high.

Immigration attitudes

Views on immigrant and refugee intake

Participants were asked about their views regarding the number of immigrants coming to Australia. Responses were coded such that high scores indicated more satisfaction, with "Too high" = 1, "About right" = 2, and "Too low" = 3. The results showed a statistically significant increase in satisfaction from Baseline (average = 1.84, std dev= .76) to Survey 6 (average = 2.11, std dev= .61).[30] As immigration was restricted during 2020 and 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, corresponding with Surveys 5 and 6, these results suggest that participants were happy for the immigration intakes to be paused for a while. The change of .27 from Surveys 1-6 represents a 9% change on the 1-3 scale.

Participants were also asked about their views regarding the number of refugees coming to Armidale. These results also showed a significant upwards linear trend from Survey 1 (average = 1.75, std dev = .59) to Survey 6 (average = 2.03, std dev = .56).[31] Like attitudes to Australia's immigration intake, the change of .28 represents a 9% change on the 1-3 scale with the upwards shift indicating a move away from feeling the intake is too high. Below, we consider this change in a little more detail. As shown in Figure 3, the percent of people indicating "Too high" declined across the settlement period, and the percent thinking it was "Too low" increased.

It is important to remember that Surveys 5 and 6 were conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic. As no refugees settled in Armidale after the first couple of months in 2020, the higher ratings that the intake was "Too low" might reflect that the program was on pause.

Previous research in Europe found that participants were more positive to immigration to their local area than to the nation generally.[32] Interestingly, this effect was not observed in the current results, where there was only slightly more positivity regarding the Australian intake than the Armidale intake.

[29] Flannery, B., & Watt, S. E. (2019). Pauline Hanson, One Nation (PHON) and right-wing protective popular nationalism: Monocultural tendencies at the expense of social cohesion. In B. Grant, T. Moore, & T. Lynch (Eds.), *The rise of right-populism: Pauline Hanson's One Nation and Australian politics* (pp. 63–78). Singapore: Springer Nature.

[30] Kruskal-Wallis for overall effect Surveys 1-6, $p < .001$. Mann-Whitney *U* comparing Surveys 1 and 6, $p < .001$. (Non-parametric statistics are used for the two "intake" variables as they produced ordinal data.)

[31] Kruskal-Wallis for overall effect Surveys 1-6, $p < .001$ and Mann-Whitney *U* comparing Surveys 1 and 6, $p < .001$

[32] Weber, H. (2015). National and regional proportion of immigrants and perceived threat of immigration: A three-level analysis in Western Europe. *International Journal of Comparative Sociology, 56*(2), 116-140.

Figure 2:
Average feelings about Australia's immigrant intake in Surveys 1-6.

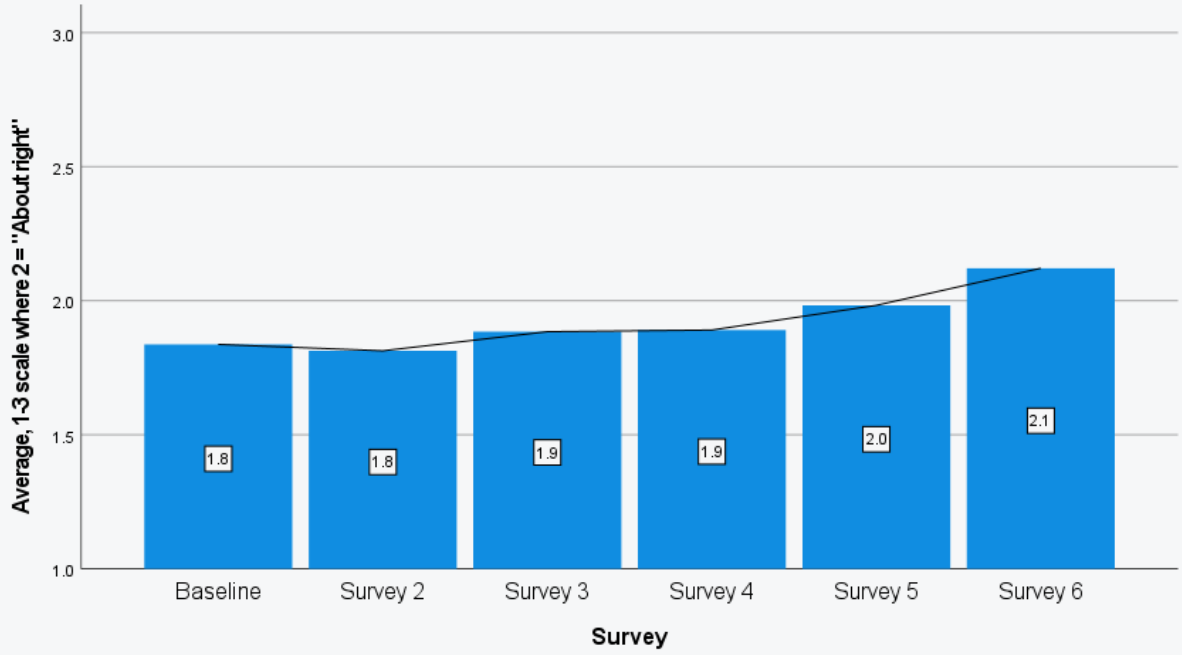
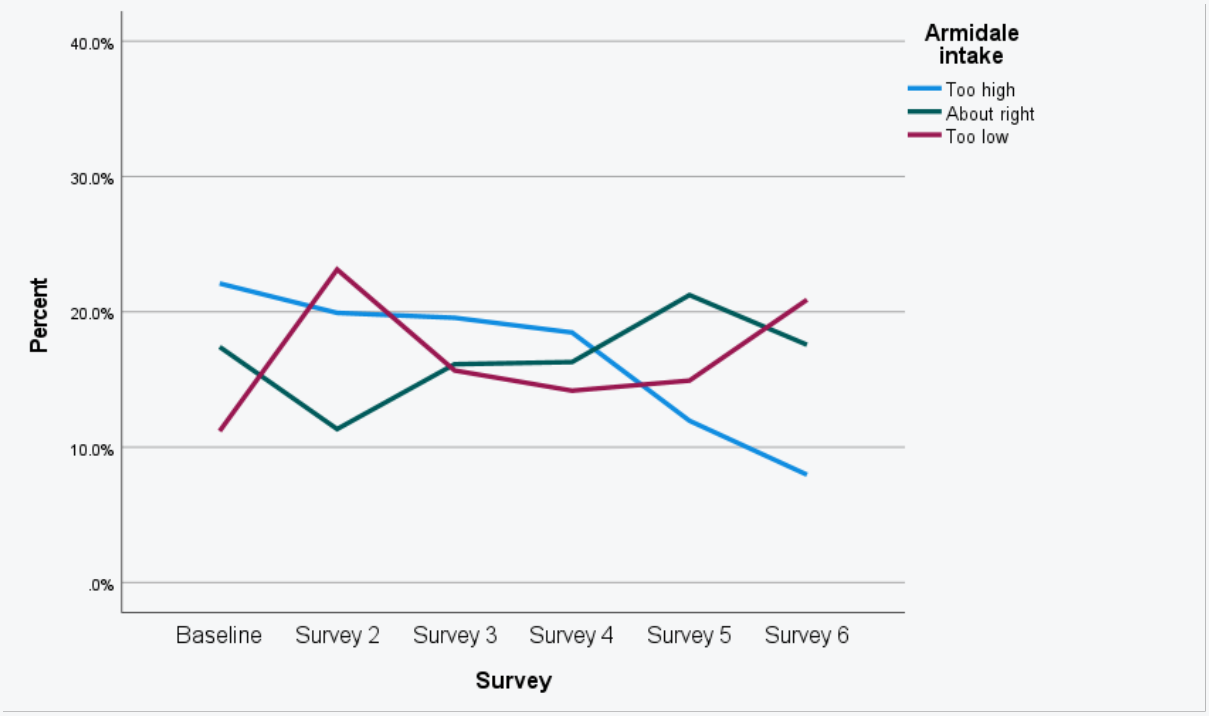


Figure 3:
Participants rating the number of refugees coming to Armidale "Too high", "About right" or "Too low".



Acculturation preferences

Both immigrants and host communities have preferences for how immigrants should acculturate.[33] Research has identified two main components of these acculturation preferences: (i) the extent to which host community members think immigrants should maintain their original culture, and (ii) the extent to which host community members think immigrants should seek contact with and adopt the new culture.[34] In Surveys 2-6, we measured the host (Armidale) community's acculturation preferences through the combination of two questions: "People who come to Australia should be able to maintain their own customs and traditions" (Surveys 2-6) and "People who come to Australia should change their behaviour to be more like Australians" (Surveys 1-6).[35]

As shown on Table 2 above, there was a small but significant decrease from Surveys 1-6 in Armidale residents' opinion that immigrants should change their behaviour to be more like Australians. However, there was no significant change over the surveys in Armidale residents' preference for immigrants to maintain their culture (average Surveys 2-6 = 3.8, std dev = 1.14).[36]

Averaged across Surveys 2-6, the degree to which Armidale residents thought immigrants should maintain their original culture correlated with a more positive overall attitude to the refugees coming to Armidale, as well as with higher desire to mix with other ethnic groups/cultures and lower concern. Conversely, averaged across Surveys 1-6, the preference for immigrants to change their behaviour to be more like Australians correlated with a more negative overall attitude, lower desire to mix with other ethnic groups/cultures, and higher level of concern (Table 3).

Table 3.
Correlations (Spearman's rho)[37] between acculturation preferences and attitudinal variables. All are significant at p < .001.

Acculturation dimension	Own attitude *r* (*N*)	Concern *r* (*N*)	Desire to mix with other ethnic groups/ culture *r* (*N*)
Immigrants maintain culture (Surveys 2-6)	.41 (918)	-.40 (911)	.30 (921)
Immigrants change behaviour (Surveys 1-6)	-.44 (1111)	.40 (1105)	-.28 (1114)

Perceptions of Ezidis' acculturation

Surveys 5 and 6 measured the extent to which participants felt the refugees were adopting Australian culture (three items average to form one measure, Cronbach's alpha = .73), maintaining their original culture, and seeking contact with members of their own ethnic group. Participants perceived the Ezidis to be maintaining their traditional ways and seeking contact with members of their own ethnic group more than they perceived them to be adopting Australian culture. These latter two variables (culture maintenance and seeking contact with their own ethnic group) did not correlate with any other attitudinal variables.[38] On the other hand, perceived culture adoption correlated with almost all other indicator variables, including positive correlations with the participants' desire to mix with other ethnic groups/cultures, attitudes to the refugees, positive behavioural tendencies to the refugees, how positive was the contact experienced with them, and negative correlations with concern about impact of the refugees on Armidale and views about the number of refugees coming to Armidale. In each case, more perceived culture adoption correlated with more positive attitudes to the refugees. This net of relationships suggests that perceived culture adoption is particularly important in predicting attitudes to refugees and refugee settlement.

We also examined how differences between acculturation preferences and perceptions of the

[33] Bourhis, R. Y., et al. (1997). Towards an interactive acculturation model: A social psychological approach. *International Journal of Psychology, 32*(6): 369-386.

[34] Berry, J. W., & Sam, D. L. (1997). Acculturation and adaptation. *Handbook of cross-cultural psychology, 3*(2), 291-326.

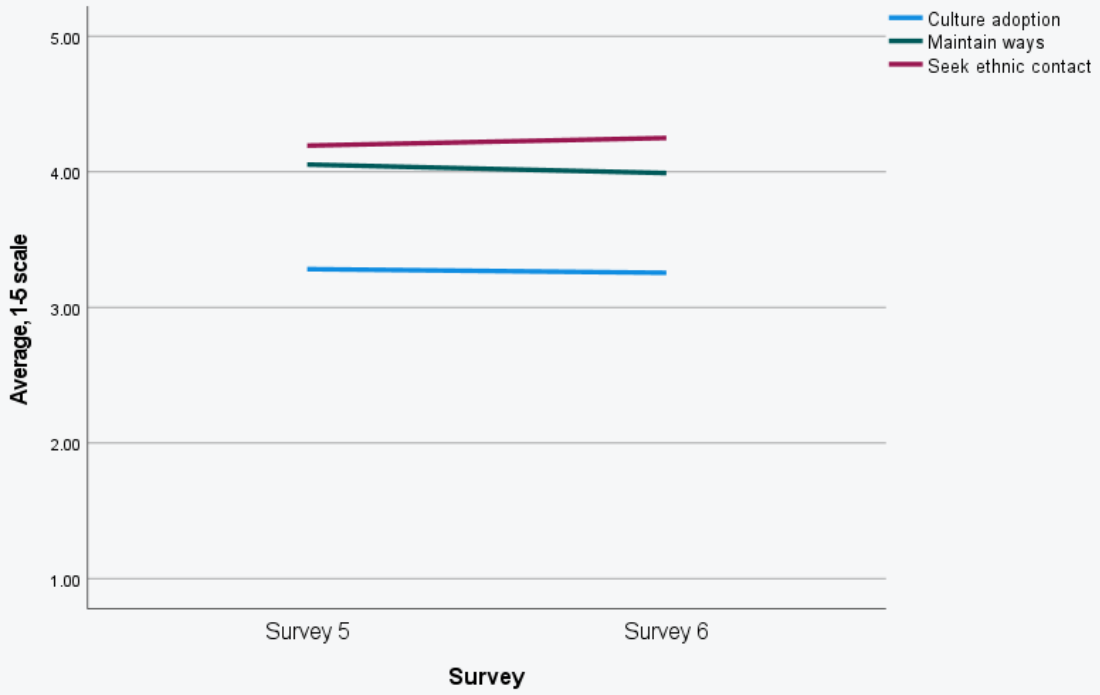
[35] Due to an error the first question was not included in Survey 1.

[36] Kruskal-Wallis, $p = .281$

[37] Rank order correlations (Spearman's rho) were computed as not all variables in the correlation matrix were normally distributed.

[38] Spearman's *rho* was computed

Figure 4:
Average Ezidis' perceived culture adoption and maintenance, Surveys 5 and 6.



Ezidis' culture maintenance and culture adoption related to other variables. A discrepancy score was computed by subtracting participants' acculturation preferences from their perceptions of the refugees' culture maintenance and culture adoption. Using multiple regression, the results revealed that (i) a greater perceived culture adoption discrepancy related to more positive attitudes, less concern, and more positive contact, and (ii) a greater perceived culture maintenance discrepancy related to greater concern. Thus, exceeding participants' preference for immigrants' acculturation behaviour had positive outcomes when it was culture adoption, but negative outcomes when it was culture maintenance.

Table 4:
Standardised regression coefficients (ß) showing relationships between discrepancy scores and attitudinal variables. ß scores are interpreted similarly correlation coefficients, with 0 indicating no relationship and 1 indicating a perfect relationship.

Discrepancy score	Own attitude ß (N)	Concern ß (N)	Contact valence ß (N)
Ezidis' culture maintenance	-.09 (271)	.21** (267)	-.10 (191)
Ezidis' culture adoption	.49** (271)	-.35** (267)	.38** (191)

** $p < .001$

Summary

The results indicated a positive trend over time in Armidale residents' attitudes regarding the number of refugees settling. However, this satisfaction was highest when the refugee intake was suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This could reflect factors other than a liking of low numbers, for example, respondents may have appreciated the pause in intake which allowed calibration and response to the changed circumstances during the pandemic.

There were some important differences between participants' acculturation preferences and how they responded to the Ezidis' acculturation. Despite Armidale residents expressing a belief that immigrants should be able to maintain their culture and traditions (the average response indicated "Agree") and not demanding that newcomers should change to become like Australians (the average response indicated "Neither agree nor disagree"), they were more positive when they perceived the Ezidis to be adopting Australian ways, and this was more so when it was beyond the preferred level of culture adoption expressed in their acculturation preferences. On the other hand, the Ezidis' perceived level of culture maintenance per se did not have an effect, but the discrepancy scores showed that participants were more concerned when the Ezidis' culture maintenance was perceived to go further than the preferred level of culture maintenance.

Together, these results suggest that while Armidale residents appeared to be reasonably open to multiculturalism, on average they were happier when Ezidis adopted Australian ways and when the Ezidis' culture maintenance did not exceed their expectation/preference.

Attitudes and concerns regarding the refugees coming to Armidale

Attitudes towards the refugees coming to Armidale

We used an "attitude thermometer" to assess attitudes towards the refugees.[39] Participants were first asked to assess their own attitudes ("How would you rate your overall attitude towards the refugees coming to Armidale – this time on a scale of 0 – 100, where 100 is extremely favourable, 50 is neither favourable nor unfavourable and 0 is extremely unfavourable?") and then to assess others' attitudes ("And on the same rating scale, what do you think is the typical attitude of people in Armidale regarding refugees coming to Armidale?"). In the current research, the direct (own attitude) and indirect (others' attitude) measures showed a significant moderate correlation.[40]

The results showed significant[41] upwards linear trends over the study period for both the direct and the indirect measures. Own attitudes went from an average of 69.0 (std dev = 26.9) at Baseline to 77.5 (std dev = 19.6) in Survey 6, a change of 8.5% on the 100-point scale and estimates of others' attitudes went from an average of 52.3 (std dev = 20.0) at Baseline to 60.5 (std dev = 17.2) at Survey 6, a change of 8.2%. Thus, both measures showed increasing positivity to the refugees coming to Armidale.

Participants rated their own attitudes significantly higher than those of others.[42] This result is consistent with previous research which shows that people tend to (inaccurately) regard others as being more prejudiced than themselves. In fact, previous Australian research found that the more prejudiced a person was, the more inaccurately they over-rated others' prejudice.[43] The implication of this is that prejudiced people may feel entitled to express their negative views in the belief that others agree with them. The earlier research by Watt and Larkin also found non-prejudiced people to overestimate

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[39] Haddock, G., & Zanna, M. P. (1998). Evaluation thermometer measure for assessing attitudes toward gay men. In C. M. Davis, W. L. Yarber, R. Bauserman, G. Schreer, & S. L. Davis (Eds.), *Handbook of sexuality-related measures* (pp. 381-382). Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE.

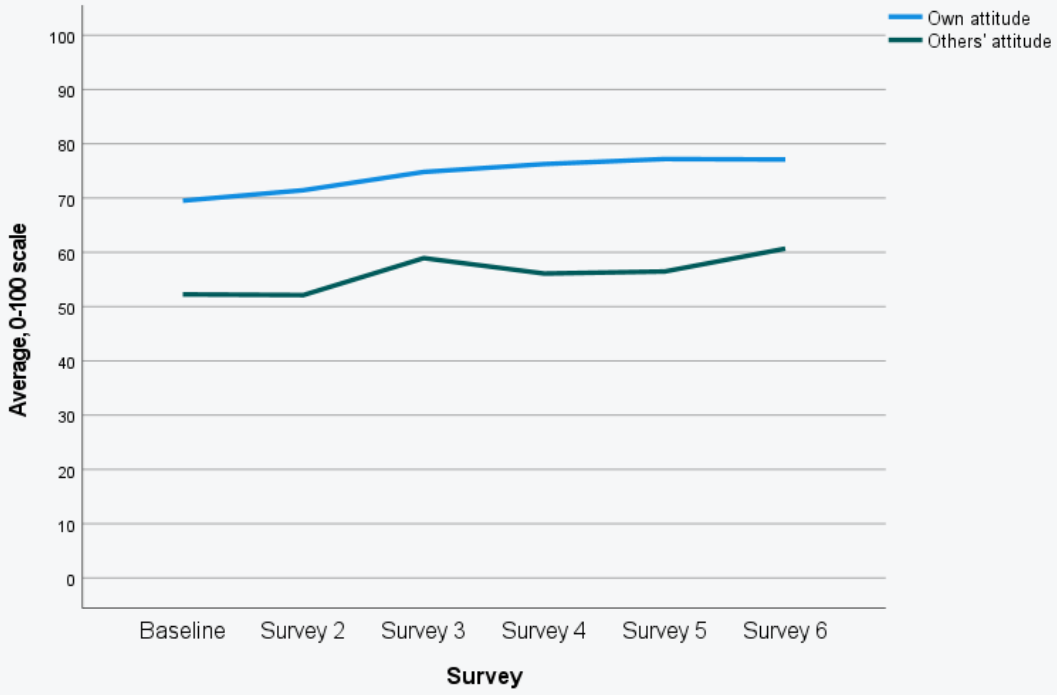
[40] Spearman's *rho* (1031) = .39

[41] Kruskal-Wallis overall effect, own attitude $p = .005$, others' attitude $p < .001$.

[42] Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test, $p < .001$

[43] Watt, S. E., & Larkin, C. (2010). Prejudiced people perceive more community support for their views: The role and own, media and peer attitudes in perceived consensus. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 40*(3), 710-731.

Figure 5:
Average estimates of own and others' attitudes to the refugees coming to Armidale.



others' prejudice (although to a lesser degree than prejudiced people). The implication is that they may therefore feel reluctant to express what they believe is an unpopular opinion.

Level of concern about the impact of refugees coming to Armidale.

Drawing on the threat perception literature, we examined concerns that Armidale residents might have about the refugees coming to Armidale. The purpose was first to identify the extent to which participants felt threat from the refugee settlement program and then to identify the nature of those threats. While we use the term "threat perception" in this section, it is noteworthy that some people perceived no threat, and provided reasons that represented benefits of the refugees coming to Armidale rather than concerns. Thus, our analysis includes perceived threats and benefits.

Participants were asked "Do you have any concerns about the impact of refugees coming to Armidale – on a scale of 1 to 5, where 5 = very concerned, 3 = somewhat concerned, 1 = not concerned at all?" This question was then followed by "And the reason for your rating?"

The results showed a steady, statistically significant decline in concern over the six surveys (see Figure 6). At baseline, the average of 2.8 (std dev = 1.3) indicated "Some concern" whereas the Survey 6 average of 1.9 (std dev = 1.1) indicated little concern.[44]

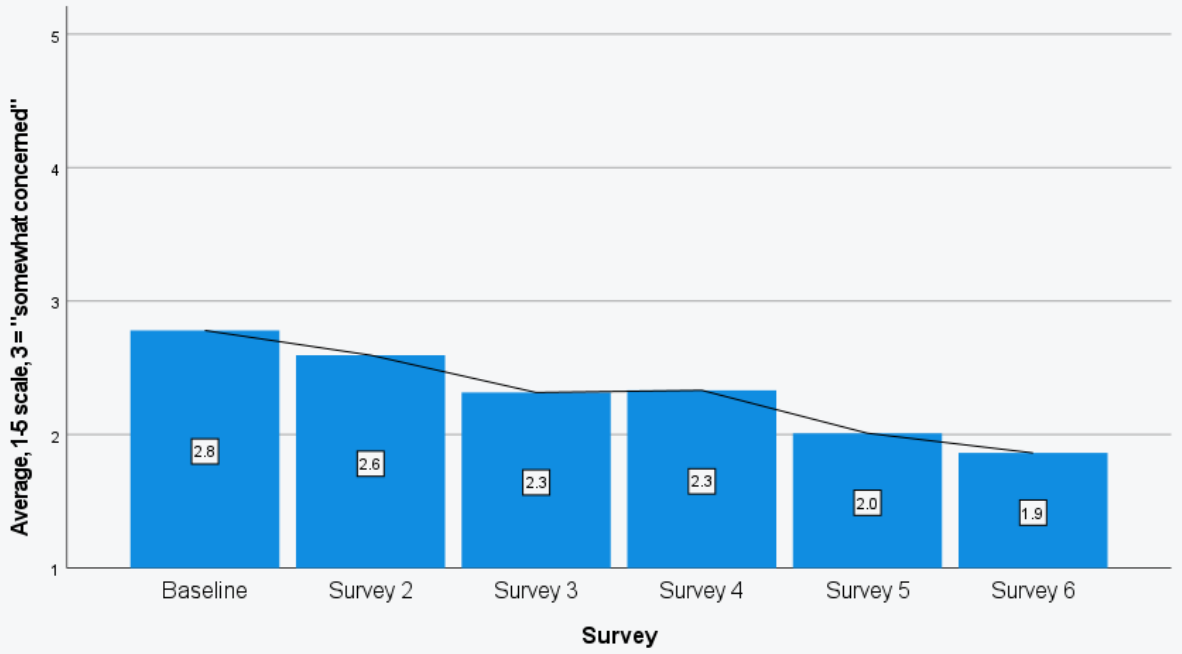
Reasons for concerns.

The open-ended responses stating the reasons for participants' ratings provided very rich data. The responses were coded into categories and classed as representing realistic (threats to material welfare) or symbolic (perceived group differences in morals, values, standards, beliefs, and attitudes) reasons. Many people gave more than one response; our analysis included up to three reasons per participant.

There were shifts in concerns over the study period. In Surveys 1-3, the most frequently mentioned concerns were about jobs, with concern that there would not be enough work for the refugees or that there would be competition with locals for the existing work. However, the concern about jobs reduced over time, with only 21 (11.5%) mentions in Survey 6, as compared with 57 (25.6%) mentions in Survey

[44] Kruskal-Wallis overall $p < .001$, Mann-Whitney U comparing Baseline and Survey 6, $p < .001$

Figure 6:
Average level of concern regarding the impact of refugees coming to Armidale.



2. Another frequently mentioned set of concerns was about resources, with a frequently expressed concern that Armidale wouldn't have enough support services for the refugees or that there wouldn't be enough housing. Some participants also expressed the view that Armidale had adequate resources and could accommodate the refugees. Like the concern about jobs, mentions of resources decreased over time, with resources mentioned only two-thirds as often in Survey 6 as Baseline.

The third most frequently mentioned reason was the refugees' integration. This showed a curvilinear trend, with mentions of integration decreasing from Surveys 1-4 and then increasing in Surveys 5 and 6. There were 42 (19.8%) negative mentions of integration in the Baseline survey and 39 (23.1%) in Survey 6. Some participants also commented favourably about the refugees' integration, and this was especially so in Surveys 5 and 6. Taking these into account, Survey 6 showed the most focus on integration, both positive and negative.

The most pronounced change was in how frequently contact was mentioned as a reason for their rating of concern. This was barely mentioned in Surveys 1-3, and was more prominent in Surveys 4-6, presumably reflecting more contact opportunities over time as the Ezidis became more established in the community. The contact literature shows that positive contact usually outnumbers negative contact.[45] Consistent with this, 87% of comments about contact referenced positive impressions/contact. We present more data on contact outcomes later in this report.

The open-ended results also revealed a shift towards fewer realistic but more symbolic reasons across the six surveys (see Table 5). This was driven by the comments about integration described above, which are symbolic, and was further bolstered by favourable comments about refugees bringing cultural diversity to Armidale. This theme was particularly pronounced in Surveys 4 and 5. Consistently throughout the study period, people also commented on a moral imperative to take in and care for refugees (average = 9 comments per survey).

[45] Graf, S., Paolini, S., & Rubin, M. (2014). Negative intergroup contact is more influential, but positive intergroup contact is more common: Assessing contact prominence and contact prevalence in five Central European countries. *European Journal of Social Psychology, 44*(6), 536-547.

Figure 7: Most frequently expressed reasons (%) for level of concern rating in rank order of frequency. Those highlighted in red are positive reasons.

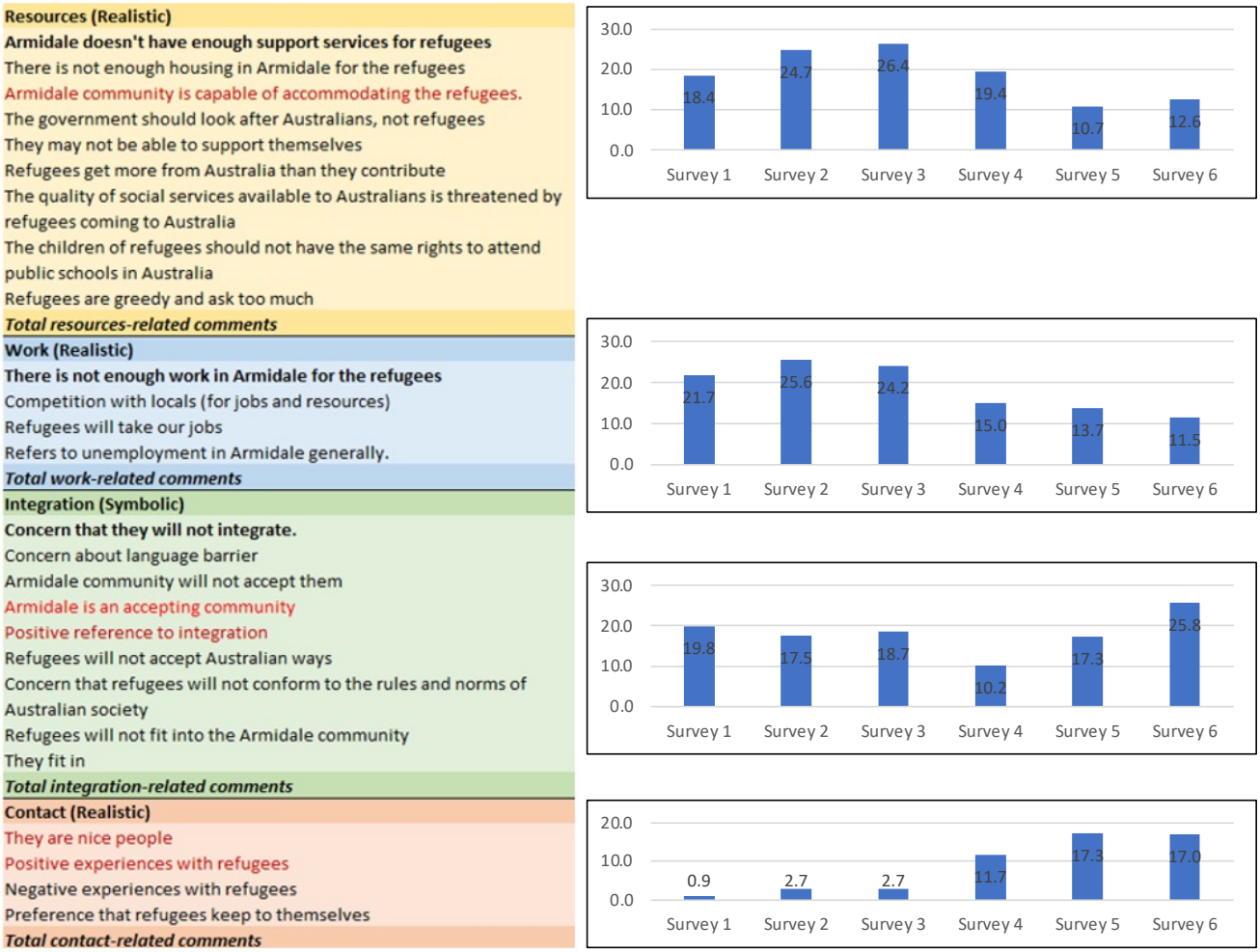


Table 5:
Percent symbolic and realistic reasons for concern ratings.

Threat	Baseline	Survey 2	Survey 3	Survey 4	Survey 5	Survey 6
Realistic	63.9%	69.4%	68.2%	71.2%	66.1%	54.3%
Symbolic	36.1%	30.6%	31.8%	28.8%	33.9%	45.7%

Benefits and disadvantages of refugee settlement

Participants were also asked whether they personally had experienced any benefits of the refugees settling in Armidale (Yes/No) and if yes, what those benefits were. The same questions were asked of disadvantages of the refugees settling in Armidale. Significantly more participants experienced benefits of the refugees settling than those who experienced disadvantages. The number who had experienced benefits increased from Surveys 4-6, while the number experiencing disadvantages decreased. However, most participants had experienced neither benefits nor disadvantages of the refugees settling in Armidale. This suggests that most of the respondents experienced the settlement as not self-relevant.

Table 6:
The number of people noticing benefits and disadvantages of the refugees coming to Armidale, Surveys 4-6.

	Survey 4	Survey 5	Survey 6
Benefits noticed			
– Yes	59	73	77
– No	128	127	107
Disadvantages noticed			
– Yes	26	23	16
– No	161	176	168

The most frequently mentioned benefits concerned benefits to culture (e.g., cultural diversity, food, and enjoyment of intercultural contact), followed by benefits to business and the economy, and then personal friendships with the Ezidis. Very few disadvantages were mentioned, but those that were mentioned tended to focus on the refugees' behaviour (e.g., too loud) or on difficulties in language or communication.

Summary

The results revealed an increasingly positive response to the refugees coming to Armidale. Across the six waves of surveys, level of concern decreased. Attitudes, which were quite favourable at Baseline, became more so.

Initially, participants showed some concern about the refugee intake and its potential impact on the town. However, less concern was reported in each survey, with the overall decrease in concern representing 18% of the 1-5 scale. At the same time, the reported reasons for concerns moved away from worries about employment and support services/resources to a focus on perceptions of the refugees' integration and contact experiences with them.

It is possible that responses in the first year (Surveys 1-3) were projected concerns which were allayed over time as Armidale residents observed and interacted with the refugees. At least one respondent stated that their concern was a fear of "the unknown". As the refugees became more "known", participants may have become more comfortable with their presence and less worried about potential impacts on the town.

From an applied point of view, the shift over time from realistic to symbolic concerns suggests that practitioners' efforts should focus on realistic threats such as concerns about jobs or resources early in the process and, over time, progressively look after more symbolic forms of threat such as concerns about integration. The increasing perception of benefits of refugee settlement over time could also be used to counteract the possible impact of perceived threats.

Behavioural tendencies and contact

Behavioural tendencies towards the refugees

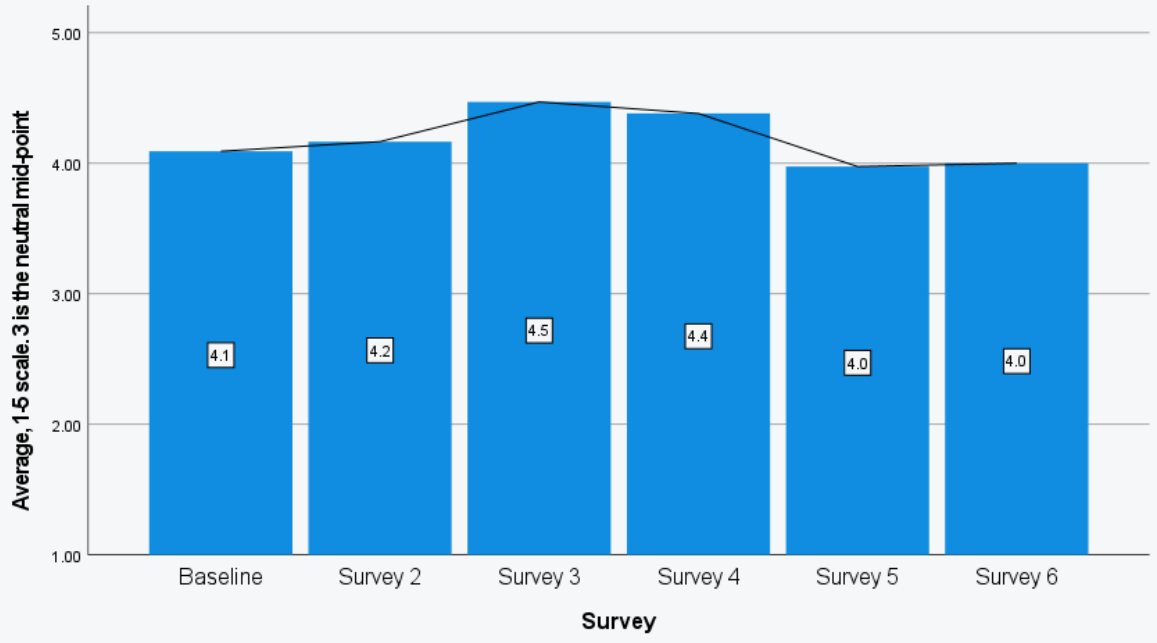
Previous research has examined the tendency to "facilitate" or "harm" (hinder) immigrants.[46] This is referred to as behavioural tendencies. Using three items from the Lopez et al. (2016) behavioural tendencies scale, we asked participants about the extent to which they would facilitate/hinder refugees' businesses and share leisure time with them. Their responses were combined into one measure (Cronbach's alpha = .76), with high scores indicating a tendency to help the refugees and low scores indicating the opposite.

In each survey, the average desire to facilitate the refugees was above the scale mid-point of 3, indicating overall positive behavioural tendencies. These responses became significantly more positive from Surveys 1-3, and then decreased significantly from Surveys 3-6.[47] The difference between the Baseline survey and Survey 6 was non-significant, suggesting that the responses had returned to Baseline levels after improving.

Two things happened during Surveys 3-6 that might help to explain this decrease. The first was that Ezidi residents started to open shops and businesses in Armidale and became more present in the Armidale community. Whereas participants' responses to these items in the first three surveys would have been somewhat speculative, by Survey 4 they would have been able to observe their behaviour in relation to the refugees and their businesses. The second factor was the COVID-19 pandemic, which meant that people were unable to visit businesses for significant parts of 2020 and 2021; their ability to interact with the refugees was also constrained. This, too, may have impacted responses to the behavioural tendency items in Surveys 5 and 6.

Participants were also asked on a 1 to 5 scale about their desire to approach/avoid the refugees by meeting them socially or volunteering to help them (Cronbach's alpha = .82). Please note that this is different to the earlier item that asked more generally about the desire to mix with members of other ethnic or cultural groups. The results showed no significant change in approach/avoid tendencies from Baseline to Survey 6.[48]

Figure 8:
Average behavioural tendencies (facilitate/hinder) to the refugees coming to Armidale.



[46] Lopez-Rodriguez, L., Cuadrado, I., & Navas, M. (2016). Acculturation preferences and behavioural tendencies between majority and minority groups: The mediating role of emotions. *European Journal of Social Psychology, 46*(4), 401-417. doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.2181

[47] Kruskal-Wallis overall $p < .001$. Mann-Whitney u comparing Baseline with Survey 3, $p < .001$, comparing Survey 3 with Survey 6, $p < .001$, comparing Baseline with Survey 6, $p = .129$.

[48] Kruskal-Wallis overall effect, $p = .015$. Mann-Whitney u comparing Baseline with Survey 2, $p = .024$ and comparing Baseline with Survey 6, $p = .451$.

Table 7:
Average approach ratings

	Survey Average (std dev)					
	Baseline	Survey 2	Survey 3	Survey 4	Survey 5	Survey 6
Average approach, 1-5 scale. 3 is the scale neutral midpoint	3.5 (1.2)	3.2 (1.3)	3.6 (1.2)	3.6 (1.2)	3.6 (1.2)	3.6 (1.2)

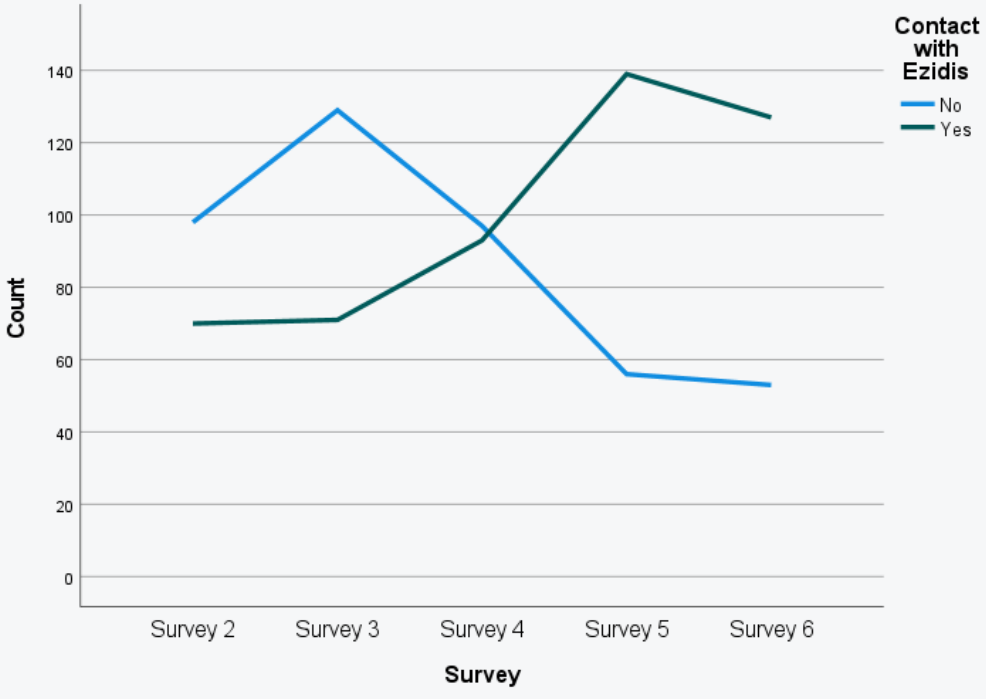
Contact

We expected contact with the refugees to be of great importance. From Survey 2 onwards, participants were asked about how much contact they had with the refugees (recoded to 0 to 4 scale, where 0 = "None at all" and 4 = "A lot") and how positive or negative the experience was (recoded to -2 to +2 scale, where 0 = "OK"). This question could not be asked in Survey 1 as there were very few refugees in the community. Like the concern questions, they were then asked the reason for their rating and these responses were coded into larger categories for analysis.

As shown on Figure 9, most participants had not yet had contact with the Ezidis in Surveys 2 and 3. This changed in Survey 4, and by Surveys 5 and 6 the majority had contact with the Ezidis.

People who had no contact with the refugees had significantly less positive attitudes (average on the 0-100 scale = 68.9, std dev = 24.3) towards them and more concern about their impact on Armidale (average on the 1-5 scale = 2.4, std dev = 1.4) than those who had some contact (average attitude = 77.1, std dev = 23.5 and average concern = 2.2, std dev - 1.3).[49]

Figure 9:
Number of participants who experienced contact with Ezidis in Armidale.



[49] Mann-Whitney *U*, $p < .001$ both for attitude and $p = .006$ for concern.

Figure 10:
Average amount of contact from 0 = “Not at all” to 4 = “A lot”.

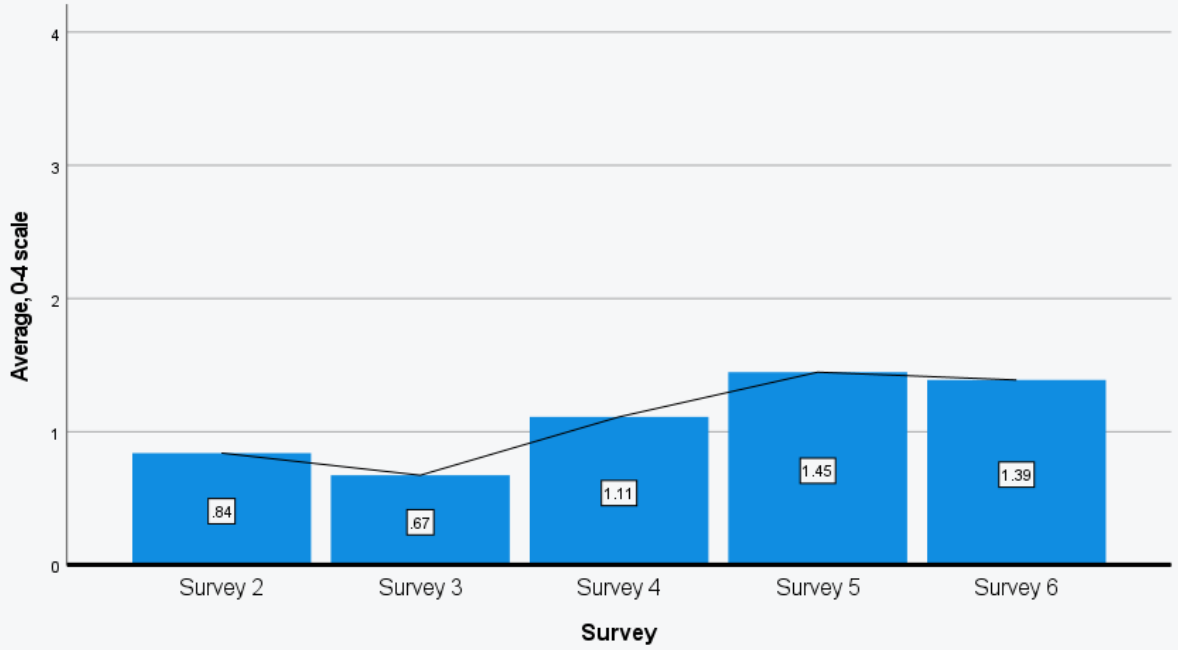
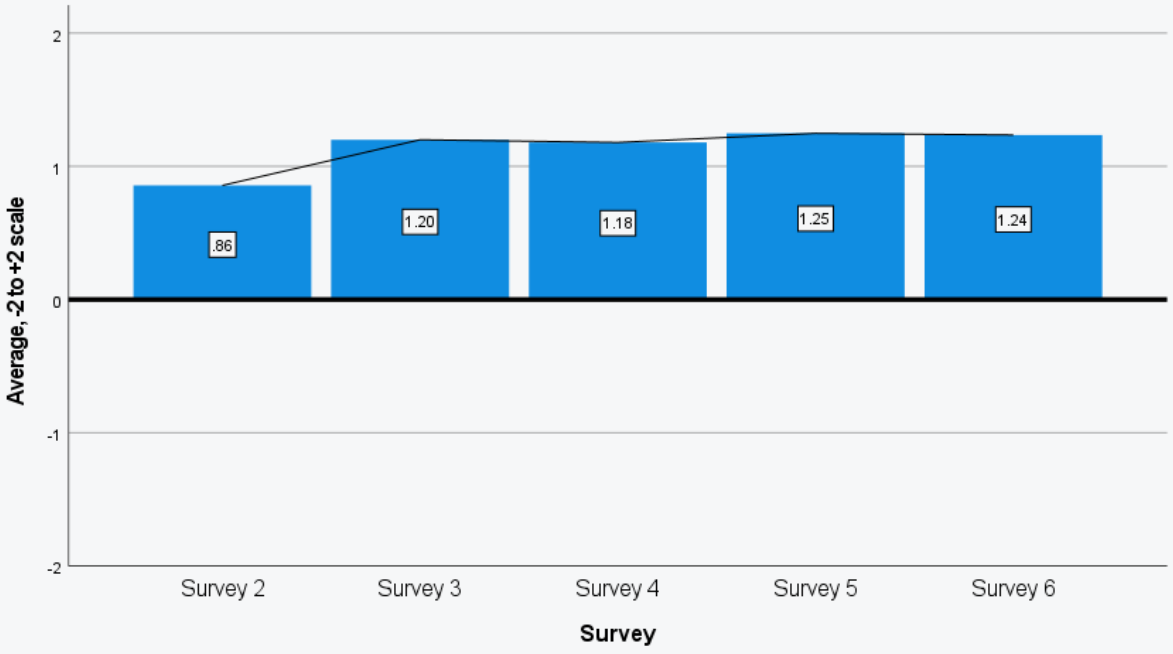


Figure 11:
Average valence of contact, from -2 = “Very negative” to +2 = “Very positive”.



The amount of contact increased significantly from Surveys 2 to 6 (see Figure 10 below).[50] Despite this increase, the average amount of contact remained nonetheless quite low. That is, participants had some contact with the refugees, but it was not very much. The Survey 6 average of 1.39 (std dev = 1.17) indicates "A little" to "Some" on the 0-4 scale.

Consistent with research showing that contact is more frequently positive than negative, participants' contact experiences tended to be rated as positive. As shown on Figure 11, the average contact ratings were positive at Survey 2 and became more positive during the study period.[51]

Relationship between contact and attitudes

As expected, contact amount and contact valence (how positive or negative) both related to other indicators of attitude, showing positive correlations with own attitude and the desire to mix with other ethnic/cultural groups, and negative correlations with level of concern. As is well established in the research literature, quality of contact seems to matter more than quantity when predicting other variables.

Table 8.
Correlations (Spearman's rho) between contact amount and valence and attitudinal variables. All are significant at p < .001

Contact	Own attitude *r* (*N*)	Concern *r* (*N*))	Desire to mix with other ethnic groups/ culture *r* (*N*)
Amount	.28 (895)	-.16 (888)	.31 (896)
Valence	.38 (456)	-.33 (455)	.26 (458)

[50] Kruskal-Wallis overall effect, p < .001; Mann-Whitney *U* comparing Surveys 2 and 6, p < .001

[51] Kruskal-Wallis overall effect, p < .04 and Mann-Whitney *U* shows contact valence at Survey 2 to be lower than at Survey 6 (*p* = .017).

Reasons for how positive or negative the contact was

Surveys 3 onwards asked participants their reasons (attributions) for how positive or negative the contact was. While attributions for how the interaction went could be to many things – how friendly or open the participant is to refugees, the interaction context, etc., most comments focused on the Ezidis themselves (see Figure 12). These comments were overwhelmingly positive, with about eleven positive comments (*n* = 395) for every negative one (*n* = 35).

As shown on Table 9, the number of positive comments "About them" greatly increased during the study period, while the number of negative comments decreased. The most frequent comments were that the Ezidis were friendly (*n* = 71), grateful (*n* = 35), polite (*n* = 27), and nice (*n* = 24).

Table 9:
Frequency of positive, negative, and neutral attributions to "About them" for valence of contact experience.

	Survey 3	Survey 4	Survey 5	Survey 6
Positive	42	91	129	133
Negative	9	4	10	8
Neutral	1	1	4	2

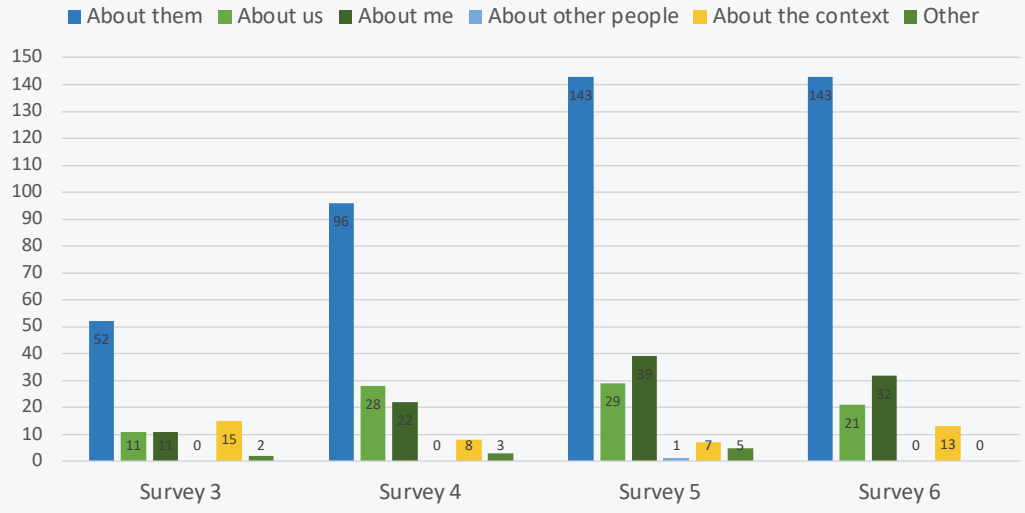
Surveys 4 onwards added a question concerning where the contact took place. As shown on Figure 13, despite the repeated COVID-19 lockdowns during 2020 and 2021, most contact took place either generally around the community ("Out and about") such as shops and shopping centres, in parks, and in the neighbourhood (*n* = 123) or in workplaces, businesses, and places of education (*n* = 109).

Summary

Together, the results for behavioural tendencies and contact showed some fluctuation across the surveys in how much Armidale residents desired to help or hinder the refugees, with positive tendencies peaking at Survey 3 and then returning to Baseline levels by Survey 6. A measure of how much participants wanted to approach the refugees showed a small increase across the surveys.

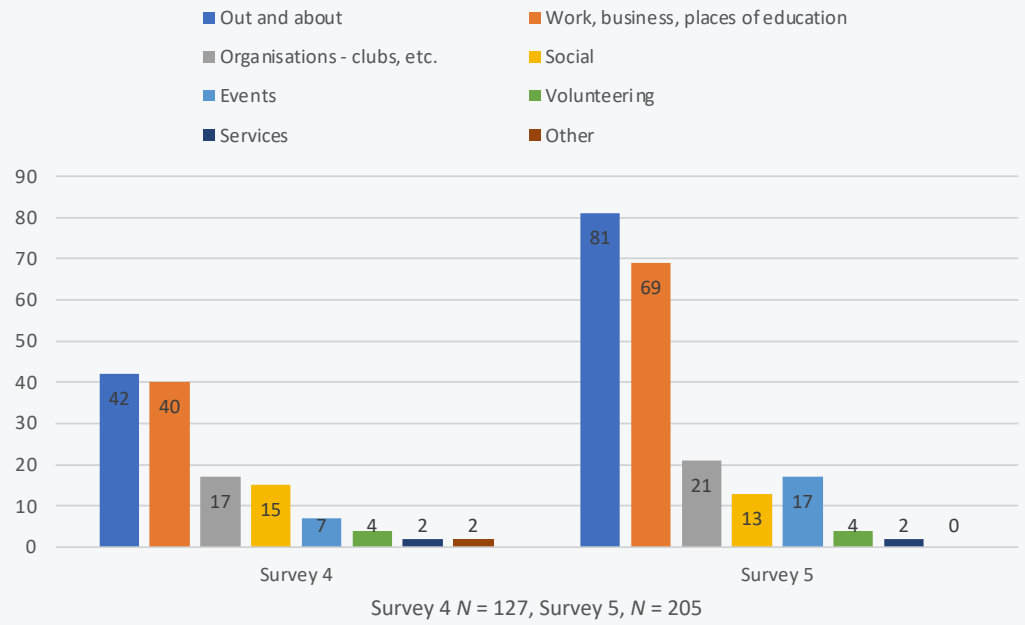
There was increasing contact with the refugees across the study period, most of which was reported to be either "Out and about" or in places of work, business, or education. Consistent with other research findings, contact and attitudes were

Figure 12:
Reasons for contact rating.



Survey 3 *N* = 91, Survey 4 *N* = 158, Survey 5, *N* = 237, Survey 6, *N* = 226

Figure 13:
Locations in which contact took place, Surveys 4 and 5.



Survey 4 *N* = 127, Survey 5, *N* = 205

correlated such that more contact, and more positive contact, both related to more positive attitudes and less concern.

The contact tended to be experienced as positive, with the positive nature of the contact most frequently attributed to positive characteristics of the Ezidis. This showed that participants tended to focus on the Ezidis rather than on the context or on themselves. This bodes well, as there is evidence that perceptions of individuals tend to generalise to group perceptions.[52] Hence, the positive evaluations of individual Ezidis can be expected to lead to more positive impressions of Ezidis generally.

Community attitudes segmentation

One aim of this study was to identify like-minded segments within the Armidale community concerning their attitudes to the refugees coming to Armidale and how this might change over time. We used two-step cluster analysis to achieve this aim.

Cluster analysis is a mathematical procedure used to identify people who are similar to one another and different from others on a set of variables. We identified six clustering variables that produced a meaningful 4-cluster solution within each survey. [53] We called this "the standard solution" as the same analysis was used for each survey.[54] The variables were:

- **Desire to mix** with different ethnic/cultural groups
- **Armidale intake** (Too high, About right, Too low)
- **Level of concern** about the impact of refugees coming to Armidale
- Belief that Australians should do more to **learn about the customs and heritage** of different ethnic and cultural groups in this country
- **Willingness to volunteer** to help refugees
- **Own attitude** towards the refugees coming to Armidale (attitude thermometer)

At Baseline and in Survey 2, we labelled the clusters:

- "Enthusiastic"
- "Positive"
- "Concerned", and
- "Resistant".

The "Enthusiastic" and "Positive" clusters formed the majority, while the "Concerned" and "Resistant" clusters formed the minority.

[52] Paolini, S., & McIntyre, K. (2019). Bad Is stronger than good for stigmatized, but not admired outgroups: Meta-analytical tests of intergroup valence asymmetry in individual-to-group generalization experiments. *Personality and Social Psychology Review, 23*(1), 3–47.

[53] Cluster analysis is sensitive to multi-collinearity (high correlations between the indicator variables). We tested the correlations between the clustering variables within each survey. The items showed weak to moderate correlations with one exception – there was a correlation between own attitude and feelings about the Armidale intake (Too high, About right, Too low) that varied from .76 at Baseline to .47 in Survey 6, with most of the correlations hovering around .70 (i.e., 49% shared variance). The cut-off for multi-collinearity is usually determined at a correlation of .80. As the cluster results were more cogent when "Armidale intake" was included, this variable was retained in the cluster analyses.

[54] The clustering variables showed some skew. We compared the cluster solutions using transformed and non-transformed data (to correct skew). The analyses using the non-transformed data showed a better fit and were more clearly interpretable. Furthermore, the data distribution residuals were worsened rather than improved by transforming the data. Hence, the cluster solutions using the non-transformed data were used.

Table 10:
Average scores on the six indicator variables for the combined Resistant/Concerned cluster in Surveys 3-6 indicating the upwards or downwards movement of each measure in Survey 6.

	Survey 3	Survey 4	Survey 5	Survey 6
Desire to mix with other ethnic groups/cultures (3 = neutral)	2.9	2.9	3.1	↑ 3.3
Armidale intake (2 = neutral)	1.0	1.0	1.1	↑ 1.7
Level of concern (0 = no concern)	4	3.8	4	↓ 2.7
Learn more (3 = neutral)	2.5	2.8	2.7	↑ 3.6
Volunteer (0 = very unlikely)	1.2	1.3	1.2	↑ 1.5
Own attitude (50 = neutral)	44	48	35	↑ 56

Survey 3 produced a different 'best fit' solution. Consistent with the more positive attitudes shown in that survey, the cluster analysis identified a new cluster with extremely positive attitudes. We labelled this cluster "Champions". The "Positive" and "Enthusiastic" clusters were still present. A fourth cluster that formed just 21% of the sample was labelled "Resistant/Concerned"- in essence, an amalgamation of two clusters from Baseline and Survey 2. Thus, the Survey 3 solution produced the following clusters:

- "Champions"
- "Enthusiastic"
- "Positive"
- "Resistant/Concerned".

79% of the sample fell into the first three (positive) clusters. Surveys 4 and 5 produced the same solution. In Survey 4, the "Champions" cluster greatly expanded, but in Survey 5 the solution returned to a similar balance to Survey 3, albeit with a reduced number of people in the "Resistant/Concerned" cluster and more people in the "Enthusiastic" cluster.

The final survey, Survey 6, produced a slightly different solution. In the previous surveys, the "Resistant/Concerned" cluster expressed attitudes that were negative to the refugees. That is, the average score for "own attitude" was below the neutral midpoint of 50 in each survey. However, by Survey 6 this was no longer the case: the least positive cluster had an average score of 55.4 on the 0-100 scale and a *t*-test revealed that this average score was significantly above 50 (that is, it was not a random effect). As shown on Table 10, this cluster was more positive than the Resistant/Concerned cluster in Surveys 3, 4, and 5 on all indicators and was above the neutral midpoint on each variable that had one. Considering these changes, this cluster was named "Cautious". In this way, by Survey 6, the four-cluster solution no longer produced a negative cluster.

We examined the cluster demographics and how they varied on all other measures in the questionnaire including the open-ended responses. Below, we characterise the clusters based on the six clustering variables and their "standout" features when compared with the other clusters.

Descriptions of the community attitude clusters identified in the six surveys. The descriptions are based on the average per group.

The "Champions" group emerged in Survey 3. They were extremely positive about the refugees coming and had very favourable attitudes to the refugees. These people would like to see a higher refugee intake in Armidale. They believed that Armidale has the capacity to take the refugees and had few concerns. These individuals showed keen interest in other cultures and intercultural contact, and they were highly likely to volunteer to help the refugees. Compared with the other clusters, the "Champions" were more likely to be male, university educated, and not from a migrant background themselves. They were also the youngest cluster (average of 46 years old) and had been in Armidale the shortest time (average of 23 years).

The "Enthusiastic" group were very positive about the refugees coming. They were highly educated, keen for cultural exchange, and would enjoy contact with the refugees. Compared with the other clusters, they were more likely to come from a diverse background themselves. They would like Armidale to have a higher refugee intake. They were especially keen for the refugees to bring cultural diversity to Armidale but expressed some worries around whether the community would accept them and whether they would integrate.

The "Positive" group were positive about the refugees coming to Armidale. These people thought the number of refugees coming was about right and were receptive to intercultural contact and contact with the refugees. They expressed some concern about whether there would be enough support services for the refugees and whether there were enough jobs for them.

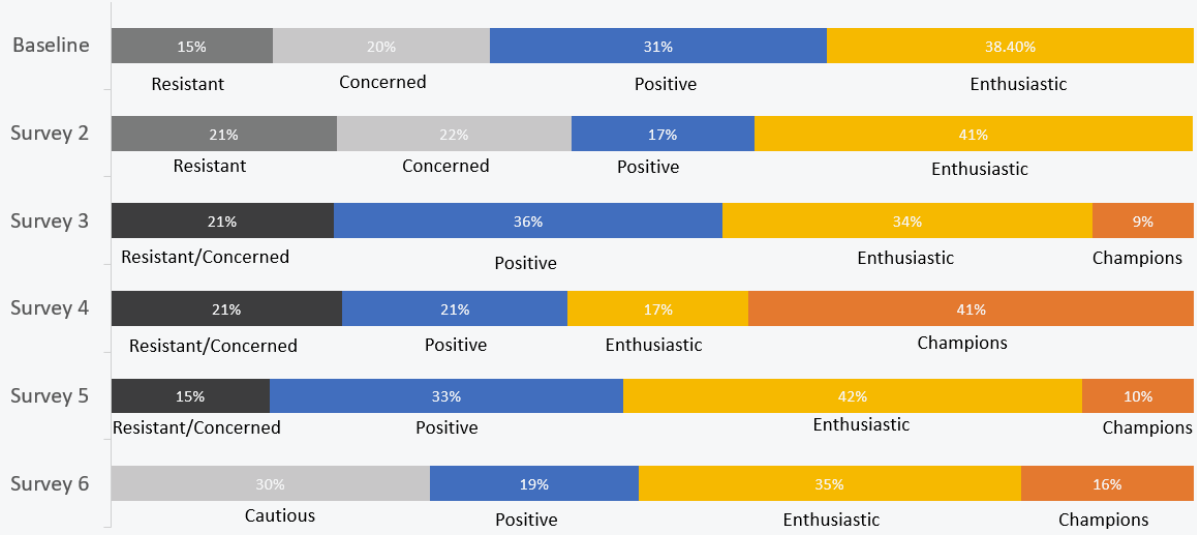
The "Concerned" group were less positive about the refugees coming to Armidale. They had neutral attitudes to the refugees but thought that the intake was too high. They expressed concern that there may not be enough jobs for the refugees. This group had completed less formal education than the other groups (38% had completed school to Year 10 or below), and their financial status was more often described as "Just getting along." It is possible that they felt competition with the refugees for jobs, which can be classed as a "Realistic" threat. However, this group was receptive to other cultures and may enjoy intercultural days.

The "Resistant" group had negative attitudes regarding the refugees coming to Armidale. They were of a similar age to the other groups but had been in Armidale the longest (average = 38 years). They tended to have a technical education, and very few came from a migrant background themselves. This group showed little interest in other cultures. Consistent with this, members of this group tended to worry that the refugees may not integrate into Australian society or accept Australian ways, highlighting that they view the arrival of refugees as a "symbolic" threat.

The "Resistant/Concerned" group showed a high level of concern about the impact of refugees on Armidale. Their main reason for this response was concern about jobs, and they thought that the number of refugees coming to Armidale was too high. Despite this, their attitude to the refugees was just slightly negative. They were quite neutral when it came to engagement with other cultures, with neither strong approach nor avoidance of them. Compared with the other clusters, members of this group were more likely to have completed education at high school level, and their financial circumstances were lower than other groups.

The "Cautious" group which emerged in Survey 6 was similar to the previous "Resistant/Concerned" group but with slightly more positive attitudes to the refugees and much less concern. Their open-ended responses to the concerns question revealed that they were more likely to worry that the refugees will not integrate. Their attitudes to the refugees were neutral rather than negative. Like the "Resistant/Concerned" group, this group was quite neutral when it came to engagement with other cultures, with neither strong approach nor avoidance of them. They were more likely than the other groups to have finished school at Year 10 or to have a technical qualification and were less likely than the other groups to have a university degree. The majority in this group were "Living reasonably", whereas the majority in the other groups were "Living very comfortably" or "Prosperous", suggesting they may have been more financially vulnerable than the others.

Figure 14:
Audience segmentation clusters



Summary

The cluster analyses reflected an overall pattern of increasing positivity towards the refugees and their impact on Armidale. This is best illustrated in the "Resistant" and "Concerned" groups, which accounted for 35% of the sample at Baseline. This expanded to 43% in Survey 2 and then decreased across the following surveys with the "Resistant" and "Concerned" groups appearing to combine into one negative group. In Survey 6 there was no longer a negative group, and the lowest group was renamed "Cautious."

Survey 4 was conducted shortly before the COVID-19 pandemic and was a period of high growth in refugee numbers. While the research literature suggests that sudden growth in refugee numbers can trigger negative responses, Survey 4 showed great expansion in the "Champions" group. This appears to have been a bubble of enthusiasm for the refugees, as Surveys 5 and 6 showed a more even distribution between the "Positive", "Enthusiastic" and "Champions" groups.

As well as demonstrating shifts in the community's profile in relation to the refugees over time, the audience segmentation has practical implications for which groups may be amenable to further information or community engagement initiatives to smooth their relations with the newcomers and proved especially useful early in the settlement process.

Longitudinal results

We went to great lengths to obtain a representative sample in each survey wave. The cross-sectional data provided a "snapshot" of the community's aggregate attitudes at each time point. However, they could not reveal whether individuals' attitudes were changing. To address this issue, concurrent with cross-sectional Surveys 4, 5, and 6, we contacted participants from earlier surveys[55] and invited them to be re-interviewed. We refer to the re-interviews as "longitudinal surveys".

After screening out respondents who were not actually Armidale residents, a sample of 312 longitudinal participants was obtained. All participants completed an initial survey and at least one longitudinal survey (31 did three longitudinal surveys, 94 did two longitudinal surveys, and 187 did one). Fortunately, there is a statistical technique that can analyse "unbalanced" data of this sort: linear mixed-effects models.[56] We used this method to discover whether individuals' responses to the refugees changed across the surveys on key indicators. Furthermore, we tested whether this varied depending on participants' attitudes, based on their initial cluster membership. People whose cluster membership in their initial survey was "Concerned" or "Cautious" were coded as "Negative", and those in the other clusters ("Positive", "Enthusiastic", "Champions") were coded as "Positive". Some participants could not be classified to a cluster, resulting in a final sample of 259 individuals who completed at least one longitudinal survey (426 longitudinal interviews) and could be classified to a positive or negative cluster. The longitudinal participants had different entry points to the research, with some doing their first interview at Baseline, and others doing their first interview in a later survey. To take this into account, the analyses statistically controlled for the length of time from when the settlement program started in February 2018 until the participant's first survey (Survey 1 = 2 months, Survey 2 = 7 months, Survey 3 = 12 months, Survey 4 = 20 months, Survey 5 = 33 months) as well as the length of time in months from the participant's initial survey until their final survey.

Table 11:
Longitudinal participants who were allocated to a positive or negative cluster in their initial survey.

	Survey 4 (L1)	Survey 5 (L2)	Survey 6 (L3)
Negative cluster[a]	35 (26%)	38 (26%)	27 (19%)[b]
Positive cluster	100 (74%)	111 (74%)	115 (81%)
Total	135	149	142

[a] The negative clusters were "Cautious" or "Concerned". The positive cluster were all the others.
[b] Chi-square analysis revealed that the negative cluster was a little under-represented in L3 relative to L1 and L2, suggesting that these people were less likely to be re-interviewed at L3.

Longitudinal results on key indicators

The key changes observed in cross-sectional Surveys 1-6 were (i) decreasing concerns, (ii) increasingly positive attitudes, (iii) increasing positive estimates of others' attitudes, (iv) increasing amounts of contact, and (v) increasingly positive contact. Here, we present analyses that tested whether these effects could be observed within-individuals in the longitudinal data.

i. Level of concern

The overall level of concern decreased significantly over time.[57] This was more pronounced among those who were initially allocated to a negative cluster, as represented by a significant interaction of time and level of concern.

ii. Own attitude

Participants' own attitudes towards the refugees coming to Armidale (measured on the attitude thermometer) became increasingly positive over time, and this was again more pronounced among those who were initially allocated to a negative cluster (represented by a significant interaction effect).[58] Simple effects analysis revealed that the increase in positivity was statistically significant only for those in the negative cluster; the positive cluster started out positive and remained at about the same level across time.

[55] The participants contacted had given permission for us to do this.

[56] Fitzmaurice, G. M., & Ravichandran, C. (2008). A primer in longitudinal data analysis. *Circulation, 118*(19), 2005-2010.

[57] Linear mixed model, for the effect of time, $p < .001$ and for the interaction of time and cluster, $p < .001$.

[58] Linear mixed model: for the effect of time $p < .001$ and for the interaction of time and cluster, $p < .001$. The residuals revealed a small departure from the normal distribution, but this was not improved by transforming the data and so the non-transformed data were used. There were no outliers greater than $|z| = 1.09$ and so no participants were recoded or removed.

Figure 15:
Longitudinal change in level of concern (1-5 scale) over time.

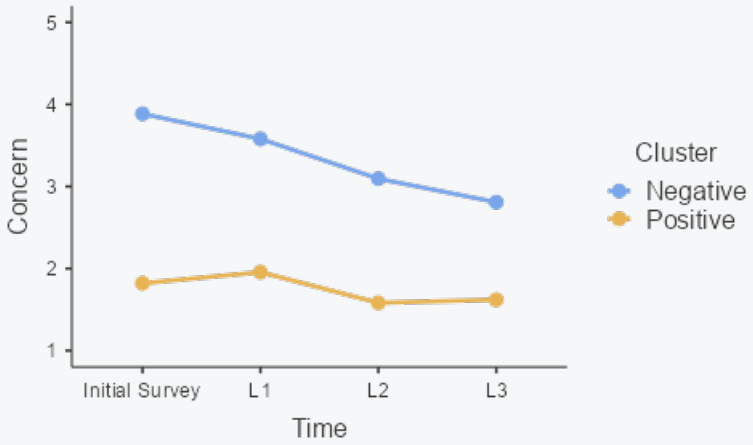
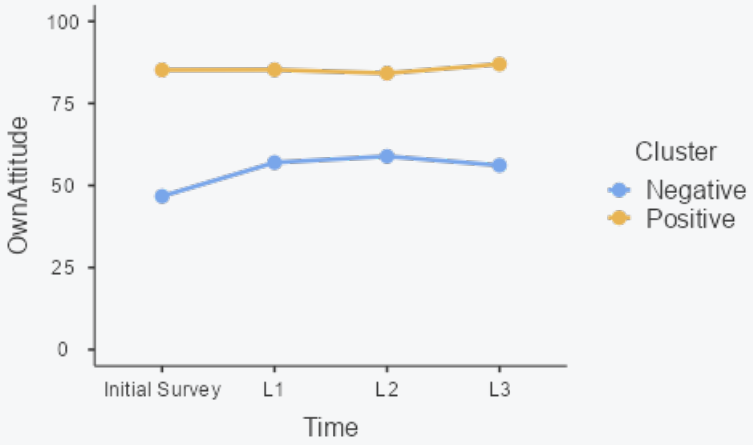


Figure 16:
Longitudinal change in own attitude (thermometer measure, 0-100 scale) over time.



iii. Others' attitudes

Estimates of others' attitudes became significantly more positive over time. This effect was the same for the positive and negative groups.[59]

iv. Amount of contact

Amount of contact showed a more complex pattern with significant effects of time and cluster (see Figure 18), but no interaction between the two.[60] There was a small but significant overall increase in contact from the initial survey to L3.[61] Checking these patterns more closely for trends showed that there was a significant increase in contact from the initial survey to the second longitudinal survey (L2), but this dropped a little in the third longitudinal survey, with the decrease most pronounced in the negative group. This pattern was supported by a significant cubic interaction between time and cluster.[62]

v. Contact valence

We asked participants how positive or negative was their contact with the refugees. This question could only be answered if contact had occurred. As some respondents had no contact with the Ezidis, there was a reduced sample for this variable with too few participants in the negative cluster for analysis. Therefore, the analysis was done for the sample as a whole (94 participants) without dividing it into groups.

The results revealed no significant change in contact valence over time.[63] Contact valence was initially positive and did not further increase in positivity.

Summary of the longitudinal results

The longitudinal results demonstrated that, on average, individuals' concern about the impact of refugees on Armidale reduced over time, their attitudes became increasingly positive, and their estimates of others' attitudes also became more positive. Each of these findings was in line with the cross-sectional results and corroborated the cross-sectional survey results, which each recruited a new sample. That is, the differences observed from one cross-sectional survey to another were also present in the within-individual changes, demonstrating change in individual attitudes to the refugees. Using this combination of methods allows us to draw firmer conclusions. On one hand, the cross-sectional surveys were more likely to provide a representative sample as they were not affected by selective attrition, but they could not demonstrate that individuals' attitudes were changing. On the other hand, there is a self-selection bias in longitudinal surveys that can impact sample representativeness,[64] but conclusions can be drawn about within-subject changes. That we found a similar pattern of results using both methods increases confidence that Armidale attitudes to the Ezidi refugees generally started out positive and became more so. Furthermore, the improvements in level of concern and own attitude were more pronounced among people who started out with negative attitudes. The results of the longitudinal sample also confirmed the increasing amount of contact that was reported in the cross-sectional surveys, but the valence of contact remained equally positive. It seems that while the aggregate contact valence trended upwards across the surveys, this change did not occur at an individual level.

[59] Linear mixed model, for the effect of time $p < .001$ and for the interaction and time and cluster, $p = .770$

[60] Linear mixed model, for the effect of time $p < .001$, for the effect of cluster $p < .001$, and for the interaction and time and cluster, $p = .103$

[61] $p = .044$

[62] $p = .027$

[63] Linear mixed model $p = .681$.

[64] In the current research, the longitudinal sample was on average more positive than the non-longitudinal participants and more likely to have a university education.

Figure 17:
Longitudinal change in estimates of others' attitude (thermometer measure, 0-100 scale) over time.

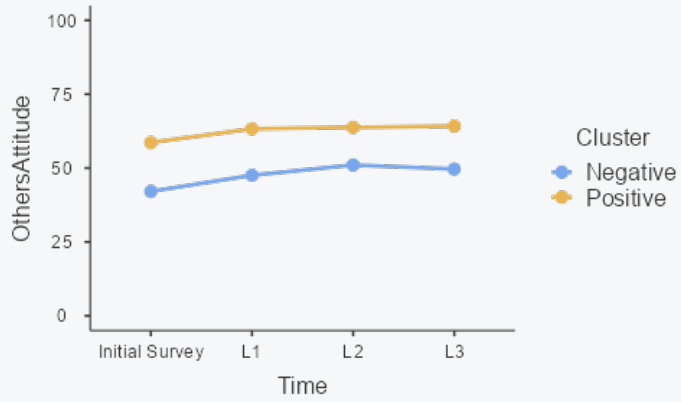


Figure 18:
Longitudinal change in amount of contact with the refugees over time.
1-5 scale where 1 = no contact and 5 = a lot of contact.
Note this was recoded in other analyses so that 0 = no contact and 4 = a lot of contact.

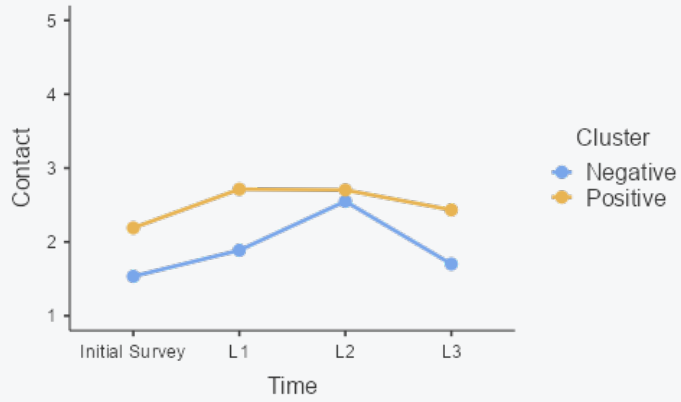
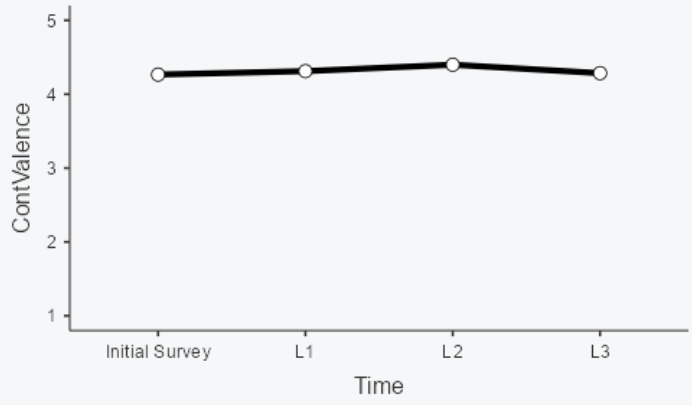


Figure 19:
Longitudinal change in valence of contact with refugees over time.
1-5 scale where 1 = very negative and 5 = very positive.
Note this was recoded in other analyses to -2 = very negative and +2 = very positive.



Conclusion

Armidale is Australia's newest designated regional settlement location for refugees. We know that settlement and integration involve mutual adaptation by the host community and newcomers. They also involve initiatives that work with the spectrum of community attitudes and concerns. This research empirically gauged host community attitudes to refugees arriving in Armidale from 2018 to 2021 to assess trends over time and identify different segments of the community, and the attitudes they hold. This allowed service providers to target initiatives to particular groups and address their concerns.

The findings from each survey were analysed and shared with local services as a way to keep a finger on the pulse of the community. These real-time findings helped SSI, the local provider of on-arrival settlement support, to balance the concerns and aspirations of new arrivals and different segments of the Armidale community and guided decisions in line with what was best for the community as a whole. This research adds to the emerging picture of the overall impact of refugee settlement in Armidale, which will continue to evolve as they contribute to the fabric of the local community.

Links to Appendices

available in online version at
www.ssi.org.au

Appendix 1. Refugee settlement in regional locations 1991-2018

Appendix 2. Media release, 11/08/2017

Appendix 3. Demographic data

Appendix 4. Questionnaire items

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