



# MULTICULTURAL YOUTH AUSTRALIA CENSUS STATUS REPORT 2017/18

Johanna Wyn  
Rimi Khan  
Babak Dadvand



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
MELBOURNE

Youth Research Centre  
Melbourne Graduate School of Education  
Research Unit in Public Cultures  
School of Culture and Communication  
University of Melbourne

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Youth Research Centre  
Melbourne Graduate School of Education  
[web.education.unimelb.edu.au/ycrc](http://web.education.unimelb.edu.au/ycrc)

Research Unit in Public Cultures  
School of Culture and Communication  
University of Melbourne  
[arts.unimelb.edu.au/rupc](http://arts.unimelb.edu.au/rupc)

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The views expressed in this paper are those of the authors and are not necessarily those of The University of Melbourne.

We acknowledge the Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of this nation. We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the lands on which our University is located and where we conduct our research and teaching. We pay our respects to ancestors and Elders, past, present and future.



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
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cmy<sup>+</sup>



migrant resource centre  
southern hemisphere inc.



MYAN<sup>+</sup>  
multicultural youth  
advocacy network (australia)



# INTRODUCTION

We are pleased to present the first report on the status of multicultural youth. The Multicultural Youth Australia Census (MY Australia Census) is the first national study of young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds.

Australia's young people are more mobile and culturally diverse than ever before. While this brings many advantages, multicultural young people face challenges that are not well understood by the community or government – such as discrimination, intergenerational conflict and insecurity.

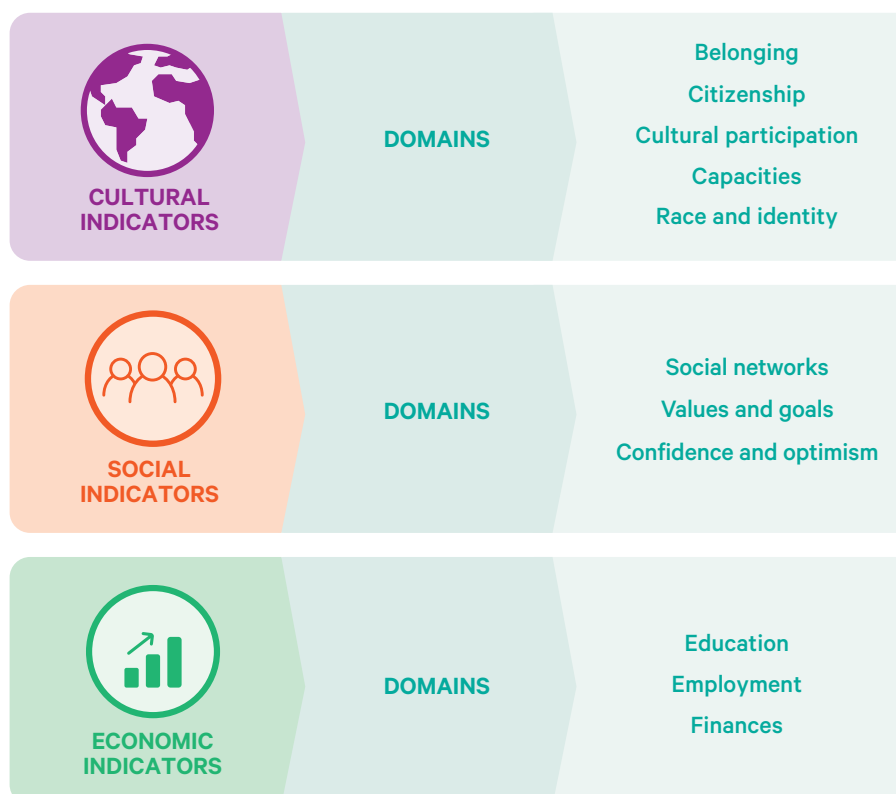
**The MY Australia Census examines social, cultural and economic indicators that provide valuable data on how multicultural young people are faring.** These indicators have been identified after an extensive review of studies on migration and settlement, cultural participation, youth transitions and social and economic inclusion.

Each indicator area includes a number of 'domains' that were used to determine the most important questions to ask Australia's multicultural young people about their lives, what they value, and their vision for the future.

The MY Australia Census is part of an Australian Research Council Linkage project (LP150100291 2016-2018), titled Defining the Status of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Young People. The Chief Investigators are Audrey Yue (2015-2016), Johanna Wyn, and Gavan McCarthy. Partner Investigators are Carmel Guerra (Centre for Multicultural Youth), Hakan Akyol (Department of Premier and Cabinet), Nadine Liddy (Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network), Gail Ker (Access Community Services Limited) and Alexandra Long (Multicultural Youth Affairs Network, NSW).

The MY Australia Census was conducted online in 2017 with 1920 respondents. A further 98 multicultural youth participated in qualitative research between 2016 and 2018.

This vital research will be used to help policymakers and organisations who work with young, diverse people to develop better policies and programs that enrich the lives of multicultural youth and contribute to the social cohesion of Australian society.





# GLOSSARY

## Youth/young person

In this study, youth is a person aged between 15 and 25.

## Refugee

A refugee is a person who has fled their country and cannot return due to fear of persecution, and has been given refugee status. Refugee status is given to applicants by the United Nations or by a third party country, such as Australia.

## Migrant

A person who was born overseas and who usually resides in Australia. A migrant is someone who has voluntarily left their own country to make a new life in another country. Migrants can be temporary or permanent. Second- or third-generation migrants are people who were born in Australia but have parent/s or grandparent/s who were born overseas.

## Multicultural youth

The research used a broad definition of 'multicultural youth', to include first- or second generation' migrants or refugees, as well as those who have grandparents who were migrants or refugees, or who identify as 'multicultural'. Despite opening up the research process to this broad sample almost all of the Census sample were first- or second-generation migrants or refugees (95%).

## LGBTQI

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Intersex.

## Hybridity

A mix of different cultural forms and/or identities. The term 'hybridity' can refer to the production of a new cultural form resulting from the mixing of different cultural markers, backgrounds, or identities. Hybridity can describe individual or collective identities, as well as specific cultural practices, texts or products.

## Intersectionality

Refers to the intersection of different markers of identity – such as race, gender, sexuality, class, religion, or physical or mental ability – in shaping experiences of discrimination or marginalisation. The term describes the multi dimensional way in which systems of power discriminate against particular groups, and the specificity of the forms of exclusion and marginalisation that people face.

## Multicultural mosaic

A vision of society in which cultural difference is imagined to exist as a series of clearly bounded, distinct and stable ethnic identities. Such visions do not capture the hybrid, complex and dynamic ways in which ethnic identities are formed, interact and are constantly transforming (Noble 2011).

**Multiculturalism**

In this report 'multiculturalism' is used in two ways: to describe an official policy discourse aimed at managing cultural difference, and a description of a demographic reality (that is, the diversification of society along cultural or ethnic lines).

**Place-based belonging**

A sense of belonging to a physical place, such as one's local neighbourhood, school, workplace or to Australia.

**Belonging-in-difference**

A sense of belonging that depends on the capacity to express a sense of cultural difference. This could be expressed as belonging to an ethnic community, the ability to engage with diverse cultural experiences, or the ability to connect with one's cultural heritage.

**Indicator**

A statistic or measure that is not merely descriptive, but monitors or evaluates a specific phenomenon. This report is concerned with social, cultural and economic indicators.

**Domain**

A subcategory of measures within a group of indicators. For example, 'education' is a domain within a larger set of economic indicators.

**Underutilisation**

Labour underutilisation refers to the rate of unemployment, as well as to those who are underemployed (those who would like, and are available for, more hours of work than they currently have), or those who are marginally attached to the labour force (including those who are available to work but have been discouraged from looking for work).

**White**

Racial categories historically emerged to support projects of colonisation. They are largely regarded as imprecise and unscientific. Nevertheless, the term 'White' is used in this report because it is used by many multicultural young people themselves, to describe the continuing existence of a dominant cultural group in Australia from which they feel excluded.









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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

How are multicultural young people faring, culturally, socially and economically?

**Multicultural young people are incredibly diverse and express their identities and attachments in a myriad of different ways.** While labels like 'multicultural', 'migrant', 'refugee' or 'CALD' can be useful in institutional settings, there is some resistance towards them. These terms do not come from young people themselves, and risk simplifying young people's experiences.

**Multicultural young people articulate high levels of belonging to Australia, and to other local, institutional and social spaces.** However, this desire to belong, participate and contribute to a range of spheres is not always recognised or reciprocated.

**Multicultural young people are highly optimistic about the future.** However, this optimism declines with age and time spent in Australia.

**Racism is a key area of concern.** Large proportions of multicultural young people are experiencing discrimination, particularly on the basis of race. Racism is both experienced and witnessed in public

spaces, shopping centres, schools, workplaces, and when applying for jobs. Racism is experienced differently by different cohorts of multicultural youth, depending on skin colour and other visible markers of race, ethnicity and religion.

**Multicultural youth have strong but complex connections to their families.** Most multicultural youth are close to their families and see them as an important source of support. However, these family relationships come with responsibilities and obligations that can create tensions, and are sometimes experienced as barriers to participation in other spheres of life.

**Multicultural young people are highly engaged across a range of cultural, civic and social activities.** Despite facing barriers and forms of exclusion, multicultural youth are participating in cultural and economic life in ways that strengthen their social networks, affirm their civic attachments, and enrich their intercultural capacities.



**MORE THAN  
3/4  
WERE BORN  
OVERSEAS**



**ALMOST  
9 IN 10  
FELT CONFIDENT ABOUT  
REACHING THEIR  
FUTURE GOALS.**

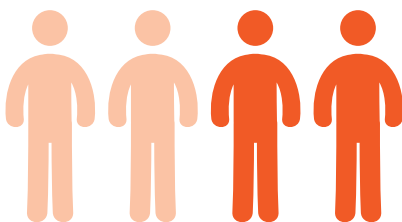


**4 IN 5  
YOUNG PEOPLE  
SURVEYED WERE  
CURRENTLY STUDYING**



**1/5  
HAD TROUBLE MEETING  
TRANSPORT COSTS,  
STUDY COSTS, OR PHONE/  
INTERNET BILLS.**

**49%  
EXPERIENCED  
DISCRIMINATION  
OR UNFAIR TREATMENT  
IN THE LAST YEAR**



**THE RATE OF  
UNDEREMPLOYMENT  
FOR THE MY AUSTRALIA  
CENSUS SAMPLE IS ALMOST**

**50%**

## Demographics

The MY Australia Census surveyed multicultural youth aged 15 – 25. The overall sample size was 1920.

- Almost one third (30.3%) of the sample came from Queensland, almost one quarter from Victoria (23.6%), 18.8% from Western Australia, 14.8% from New South Wales, 5.7% from South Australia, 4.9% from Tasmania, and 2% from ACT.
- More than three quarters of the sample were born overseas.
- Of those who were born in Australia, most had at least one parent who was born overseas.
- The sample was relatively evenly split between those who had lived in Australia for 5 years or less, and those here for more than 5 years.
- By asking young people to describe their ethnic background in their own terms the Census data reveals a rich and detailed picture of hybrid identities and affiliations, not reflected in country of birth or ancestry data, or in the designation 'CALD'.

## Cultural indicators

Cultural indicators contribute to multicultural young people's status measuring experiences of belonging, discrimination and their capacity to participate in a range of cultural spaces. The MY Australia Census found that a majority feel they belong, that multicultural youth actively seek out different cultural experiences, have high levels of involvement in cultural and social events, positioning them to be culturally mobile and facilitate cross cultural understanding. However, nearly half reported experiencing discrimination in the last 12 months.

- More than three quarters said 'I feel like I belong in Australia', 'in my local area' and 'I belong in my school'.
- Just over half said they feel like they belong to an ethnic community.
- Four out of five actively sought out different cultural experiences and almost three quarters felt they belonged to more than one culture.
- Almost half of multicultural young people had experienced some form of discrimination or unfair treatment in the last 12 months and almost two thirds had witnessed someone else being unfairly treated or discriminated against.
- The most common places where discrimination took place were at educational institutions and on the street.
- Nearly three quarters of multicultural young people participated in civic activities, much of which was on a volunteer basis.
- Half used social media to keep informed about social or political issues and 1 in 5 informed others about social or political issues through social media.
- One third had participated in arts, cultural, music or sports activities in the last year.
- One third had attended religious activities in the last year.
- Almost half of the sample stated that they used social media to post/share photos and almost one third used social media sites such as Soundcloud, Tumblr or Youtube so they could be involved in creative networks.
- Public events and venues such as theatres, galleries, museums, community events and live music shows were widely accessed.
- Financial difficulties were the most common reason why multicultural young people did not participate in these cultural and leisure activities as much as they liked.



### Social indicators

Multicultural young people's quality of life depends on the strength of their social networks. The MY Australia Census found that multicultural youth have a strong civic outlook and seek fulfilment through work and contributing to making a better society. At this stage of their lives they are mostly living with parents or guardians with whom they get along well, and a majority are able to identify someone they would go to for help with an important issue. Unlike their wider Australian counterparts, diversity and discrimination are seen as the most significant issue for Australia, followed by education and jobs.

- Three quarters of the sample lived with parents or guardians.
- Overall, the sample got along well with other family members, although many carried significant family responsibilities.
- A majority would go first to a friend for help with important issues in their lives, followed closely by parents.
- One quarter would go to their teacher for help with important issues.
- One in ten said they could not find someone to spend time with.
- One third felt unsafe walking alone at night in their local area, with young women nearly four times more likely to feel unsafe walking alone at night than young men.
- They identified the top 3 issues for Australia today as: diversity and discrimination, education and jobs and employment.
- The top three personal issues of concern were: school and study problems, discrimination and the areas of anxiety, depression and body image which achieved an equal weighting.

### Economic indicators

Economic indicators relate to multicultural young people's participation in education, training and employment. Participation in work and study can also shape cultural and social outcomes, by contributing to belonging and reinforcing social networks. The MY Australia Census found that Australia's multicultural youth are highly engaged in education but experience higher rates of underemployment than their non-migrant or refugee counterparts, and a significant minority experience financial hardship.

- Four in five young people surveyed were studying (82.7%). Of those who were studying most (88.1%) were studying full-time, while 11.9% were studying part-time.
- Over one quarter of the sample stated they were looking for work, and half stated that they would like to work more hours than they currently do.
- The rate of underemployment for the MY Australia Census sample is almost 50%, which contrasts with 31% of 15 to 24 year olds in Australia who are underemployed (ABS 2017). This suggests the job market is a key area of direct and indirect discrimination; multicultural youth are less able than their peers to find adequate work.
- Over half of the sample stated that it was either 'difficult' or 'very difficult' to find work.
- One in ten of those in paid work felt unsafe or that they were not treated with respect.
- One fifth had trouble meeting transport costs, study costs, or phone/internet bills.
- More than one in ten stated they had difficulty keeping up with house bills, food costs, and rent or mortgage payments.



# 01 SAMPLE PROFILE

## SAMPLE SIZE

The MY Australia Census sample size was 1920. While there was a total of 2798 people who participated in the Census, the completion rate was 54%, which meant a large number of surveys could not be included in the analysis. A more detailed explanation of the sample size, completion rate and process for arriving at the final sample is included in the Technical Report.

A further 98 multicultural youth participated in qualitative research between 2016 and 2018. Focus groups and interviews were conducted in regional and metro locations in Victoria, Queensland, Western Australia, South Australia and Tasmania.

## DEMOGRAPHICS

The demographic profile of the MY Australia Census sample is outlined below.

### State

Almost one third (30.3%) of the sample came from Queensland, almost one quarter from Victoria (23.6%), 18.8% from Western Australia, 14.8% from New South Wales, 5.7% from South Australia, 4.9% from Tasmania and 2% from ACT.

### Age

The sample was relatively young. Almost two thirds (63%) of respondents were aged 15 to 19.

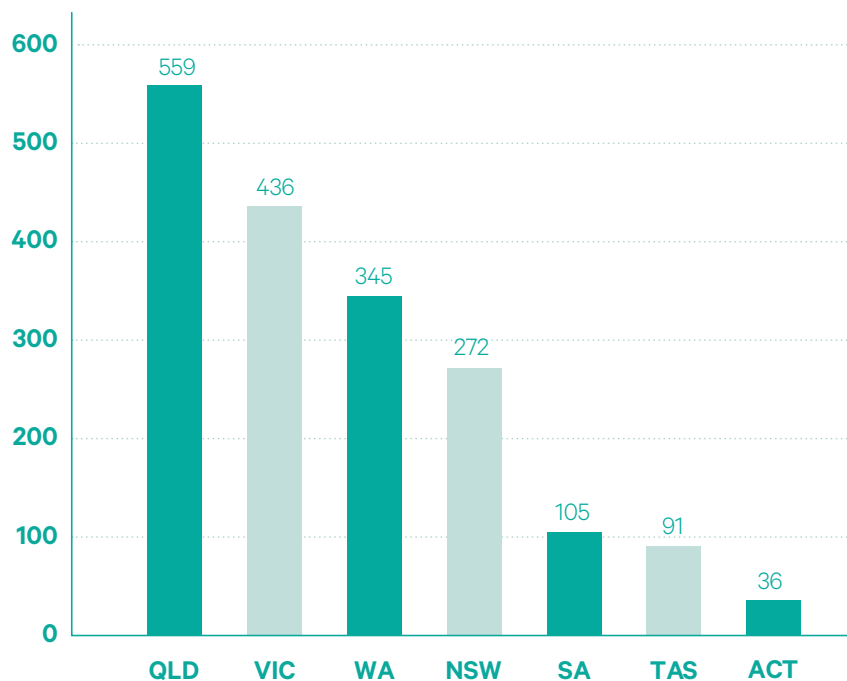
This included almost half of the sample (45.2%) who were aged 15 to 17. One quarter were aged 18 to 20. Almost another third (29.9%) were aged 21 to 25.

### Gender

Almost two thirds of the sample were female (64.2%), and one third were male (33.9%). 1.4% did not want to indicate their gender, while 7 people (0.5%) identified as 'Other'.

Gender was a significant factor shaping the experiences of multicultural young people. Females were 3.7 times more likely to feel unsafe walking alone at night than males. Males were also 10% more likely to have a strong sense of place-based belonging – that is, to their neighbourhoods, schools, workplaces and Australia – than females. Qualitative research highlighted the gendered ways in which multicultural young people experience family responsibilities and mobility, which may contribute to these different experiences of belonging.

Table 1.1 Sample distribution by state





## Sexuality

Just over one in ten respondents identified as LGBTQI (11.2% percent), while another 7.4% were unsure or did not want to say.

## Disability

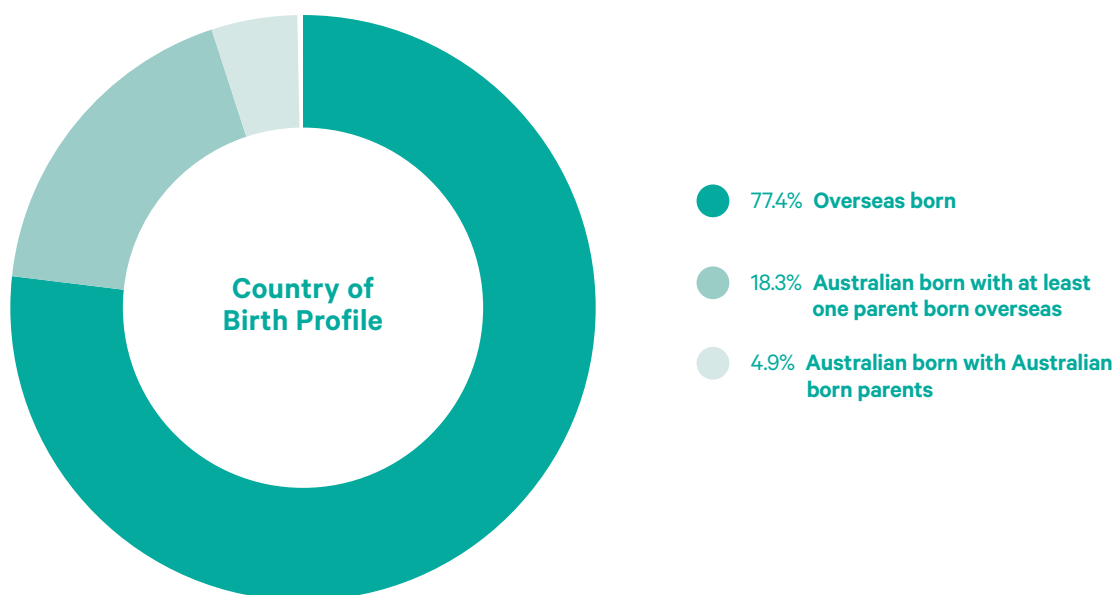
7.3% identified as having a physical or intellectual disability, while a similar number (7.6%) were not sure. Four fifths did not have a disability (82.8%) or did not want to say (2.2%).

## COUNTRY OF BIRTH AND ETHNIC IDENTITY

### Country of birth

More than three quarters of the sample were born overseas (77.4%). Of those who were born in Australia, most had at least one parent who was born overseas.

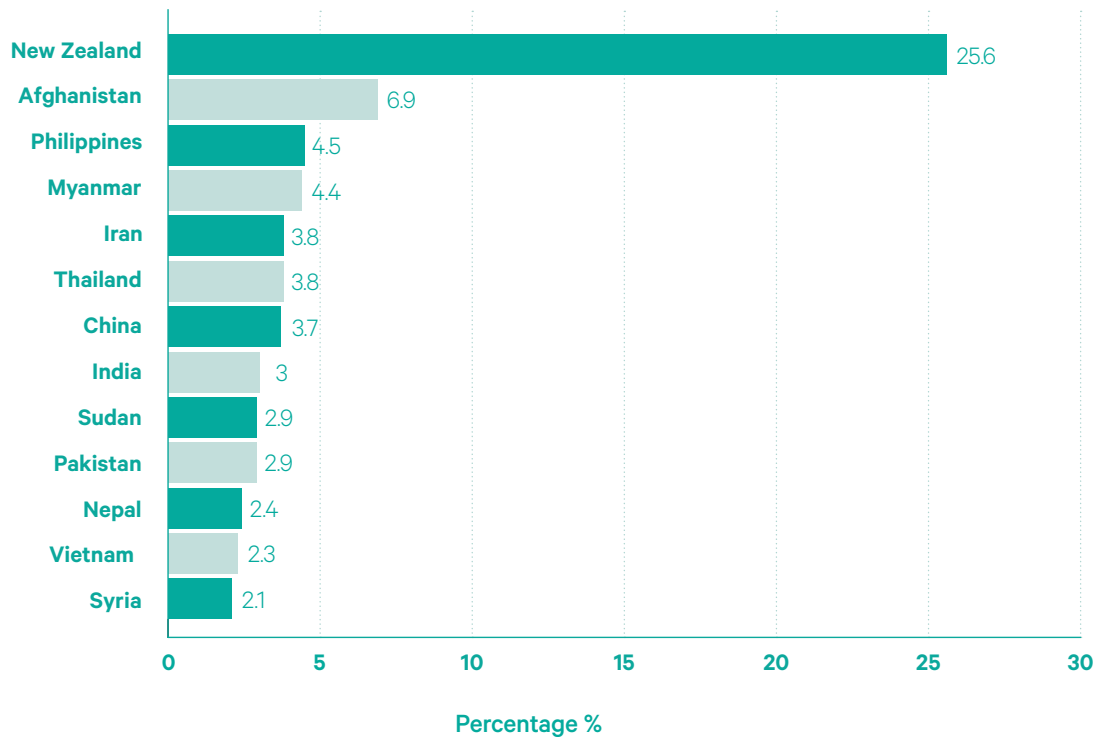
Table 1.2 Country of birth profile



<sup>1</sup>This figure is comparable to the number of LGBTQI people (11%) in the general population (AHRC 2014).

Of those born outside Australia, the top 5 countries of birth were New Zealand (25.6%), Afghanistan (6.9%), Philippines (4.5%), Myanmar (4.4%) and Iran (3.8%).

**Table 1.3 Top 10 countries of birth outside Australia**



### New Zealand born sample

The MY Australia sample contains a high proportion of New Zealand born respondents (25.6%). This is higher than the 2016 ABS figure for the proportion of young New Zealanders in the general youth population (10%).

Our analysis showed that the over-representation of the New Zealand sample did not skew the findings. However, the data does highlight a number of key differences between New Zealand born young people and other multicultural youth.

Young people from New Zealand were more likely to be concerned with a number of personal issues, including bullying, body image, depression, suicide, homelessness and anxiety. However, they were less likely to be concerned about their personal safety, and more likely to feel they belong in Australia, and in educational institutions. They were also more likely than other multicultural youth to feel belonging in their workplace.

New Zealand born youth were less likely to say they felt belonging to a specific ethnic community, and less likely to seek out different cultural experiences.

Young New Zealanders in the sample were generally longer term Australian residents (living in Australia for more than 5 years) than the rest of the sample. The New Zealand born sample had better employment outcomes than other multicultural youth – they were more likely to be working (either in full-time work or in casual/irregular work), and less likely to say it was difficult for them to find work. Despite these positive findings, New Zealand born youth were less optimistic about their future goals, compared with other multicultural youth.

It should be noted that there was a high degree of cultural diversity among the New Zealand born sample. Of the 374 people born in New Zealand:

- 97 identified as Maori (26% of NZ born sample)
- 82 described themselves as White New Zealander/Pakeha/European heritage (22% of NZ born sample)
- 29 identified as Pacific Islander (8% of NZ born sample)
- 20 people claimed mixed New Zealander and non-European heritage (5% of NZ born sample)

<sup>2</sup> All differences between the New Zealand born sample and the wider multicultural youth sample described in this section are significant differences. The method used to determine significant differences is described in the Technical Report.

## Identity and labels among 'CALD' youth

One of the objectives of this research has been to interrogate the category, 'culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD)' that dominates government reporting on migrants and ethnic identity in Australia.

A number of focus group participants commented that the CALD category has a tendency to flatten out identities that are multi-faceted and complex. Similar critiques were applied to the terms 'migrant', 'refugee', and to some extent, 'multicultural', which were perceived as labels applied to young people by outsiders, to diagnose, simplify or marginalise their experiences. The perception among some respondents was that these terms were used to label non-White groups or 'people of colour'.

On the label, 'migrant':

“If someone is from a Western country or Western culture, they often don't associate themselves as a migrant. They might say they are an expat or something else. ... [T]hey sort of try to avoid the term whereas if it's anyone else, a person of colour or anybody else, they're automatically labelled as a migrant. I think that has negative connotations.”

On using the term, 'CALD':

“[CALD] is usually to describe a person of colour, not just any language, you know! It is only in reference to people who would be marginalised in some sort or capacity. ... I feel like it needs to be something else, but we are so used to it that we just call ourselves that. Again, people of colour have always taken labels from other people because we have never been given the power to label yourself.”

On being called a 'refugee':

“[S]top reminding me that I've lost so much ... you don't know how long the healing process has taken me and I am not over that. So please stop making that the only thing that I have to offer. ... It doesn't allow you to become Australian.”

At the same time, it was believed that labels were sometimes necessary for communicating how their experiences differ from White Australia.

“CALD people come with a very specific set of things that they feel are not the same struggle as, you know, White people.”

By asking young people to describe their ethnic background in their own terms **the MY Australia Census data reveals a rich and detailed picture of hybrid identities and affiliations, not reflected in country of birth or ancestry data.** For example, while 4.4% of the sample were born in Myanmar, this included 1.9% (37 people) who identified as Karen and 1.4% (28 people) who were Chin – both marginalised ethnic groups who would not

be visible in the sample without having been asked specifically about ethnic background.

The question on ethnic background highlighted a range of other multi-layered, place-based, ethnic, religious and cultural attachments. Some examples of the diverse ways in which multicultural young people identified are presented on the right.

These messy and hybrid categories reflect the intersectionality of multicultural youth identity. Young people are not bound by the discrete and simple ethnic categories often assumed by policies of multiculturalism, social cohesion and minority recognition (Harris 2012). Their lived experience of multiculturalism reiterates the need to think beyond the tidy 'multicultural mosaic' and how their identities are produced through complex social networks and overlapping layers of diversity (Noble 2011).

## Migration profile

The sample was relatively evenly split between those who had lived in Australia for 5 years or less (52.5%), and those here for more than 5 years (47.5%).

Respondents had varying reasons for migrating to Australia. Just over half of respondents said they came to Australia for their parents' or family's work (38.1%) or education (18.4%). About one quarter came to Australia for their own education (25.7%). Just over one quarter came to Australia for humanitarian reasons (27.4%).

## Languages spoken

English was widely spoken among the sample (55.7% said it was their most commonly used language).

The other most commonly used languages among the sample were:

- Chinese (including Cantonese and Mandarin) (5.4%)
- Arabic (3.8%)
- Hindi (2.9%)
- Persian (2.6%)

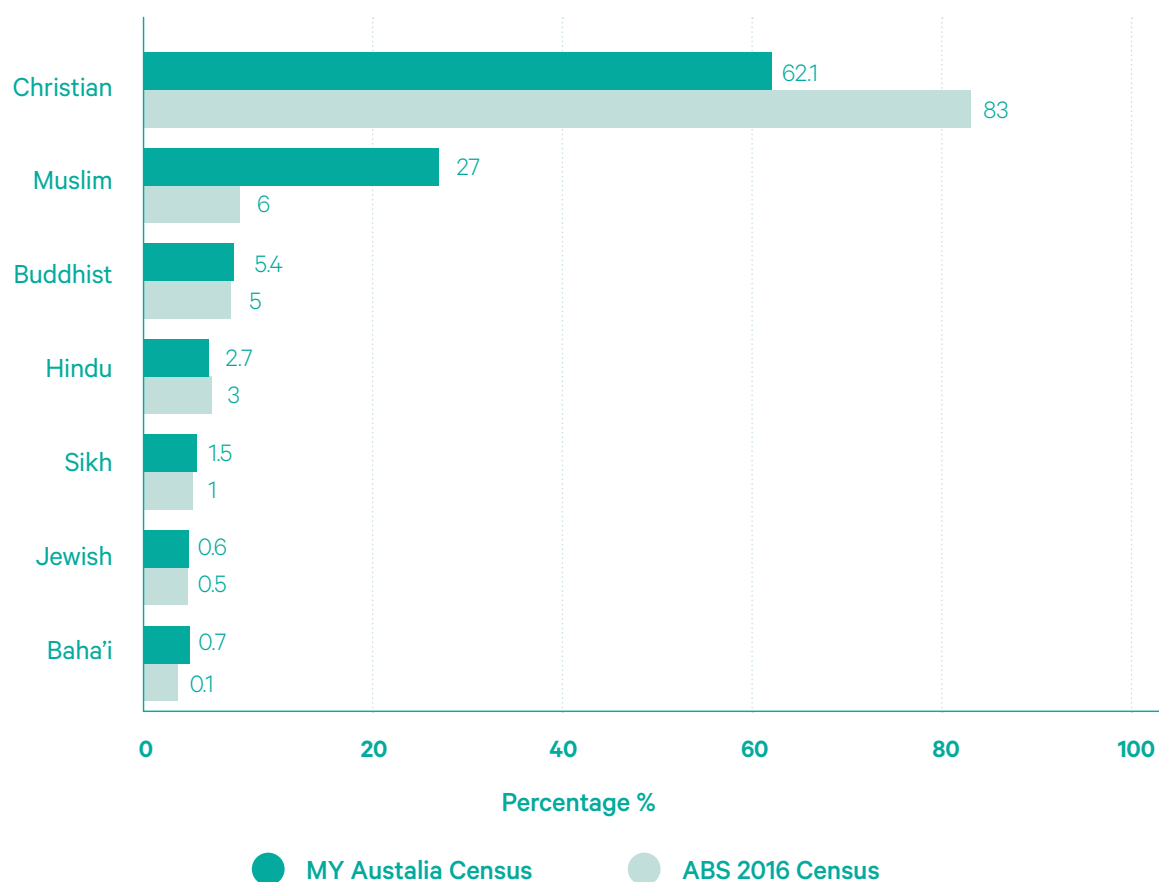
## Religion

Almost half of respondents identified with a religious group (47.2%), while half either were not religious (44.4%) or were unsure of their religious affiliation (6.9%).

Of those who identified with a religious group, almost two thirds were Christian (62.1%), and just over one quarter were Muslim (27%). Other religions represented in the sample include Buddhism (5.4%), Hinduism (2.7%), Sikhism (1.5%), Bahaim (0.7%) and Judaism (0.6%). Compared with the national population of 15 to 25 year olds, Christians in the MY Australia sample were underrepresented and Muslims were overrepresented.



Table 1.2 Country of birth profile



### Muslim sample

Just over one quarter (27%) of the MY Australia sample identified as Muslim. This is higher than the 2016 ABS figure for the proportion of young Muslims in the general youth population (6%). This large Muslim sample enables the MY Australia study to identify a number of characteristics that make young Muslims distinct from other multicultural youth.

Compared with the rest of the sample, young Muslims were less likely to be concerned with a number of personal issues, including body image, stress, depression, school problems, suicide, domestic violence and anxiety. However, young Muslims were less likely to feel they belong in

Australia, suggesting the need for programs and policies which better foster inclusion. Muslim youth were more likely to feel a sense of ethnic community belonging than other multicultural youth. At the same time, they were less likely to say they could 'definitely' find someone to help them if they were in trouble.

Young Muslims in the sample were more likely to want to work for a better society and live by religious ideals than other multicultural youth.

Young Muslims in the sample were newer migrants – a greater proportion had lived in Australia for 5 years or less, compared with other survey participants.

<sup>3</sup>All differences between the Muslim sample and the wider multicultural youth sample described in this section are significant differences. More details about the analysis are presented in the Technical Report.







# 02 CULTURAL INDICATORS



Culture refers to the practices of communication and meaning making that enable people to construct individual and collective identities, as well as navigate difference. These practices can include both contemporary and traditional cultural forms such as the arts or digital media, heritage or language. Multicultural youth are well positioned to be culturally mobile and facilitate cross cultural understanding.

Cultural indicators contribute to multicultural young people's status because they measure experiences of belonging, discrimination and their capacity to participate in a range of cultural spaces. Such capacities depend on having access to knowledge and cultural resources that can make one an active and equal member of the community.

## BELONGING

Belonging is a key barometer of multicultural young people's status. It can be understood as the subjective aspect of settlement. Belonging determines multicultural young people's capacity to participate in cultural life; at the same time belonging is also generated by participation.

Belonging is flexible and complex – multicultural young people can experience varying forms of belonging to the nation, to local and global communities, to networks of friends and family, and to different institutional and cultural spaces.

The MY Australia Census findings show that multicultural young people's sense of belonging can be understood in terms of two main modes of belonging – place-based belonging (to one's local area, educational institution, workplace or to Australia); and a sense of belonging-in-difference (including belonging to an ethnic community, to more than one culture, engaging in different cultural experiences and valuing their heritage).

### Place-based belonging

Overall, **multicultural youth expressed a strong sense of belonging, both to Australia and more locally** – more than three quarters (79.8%) said they either ‘strongly agree’ or ‘agree’ with the statement, I feel like I belong in Australia, and a similar proportion felt belonging to their local area (80.2% agreement). It appears that **a localised sense of belonging and comfort correlates with a wider sense of belonging to the Australian community.**

The significance of schools should also be emphasised. A feeling of belonging at school was relatively high (76.9%). Schools are significant as a site of acceptance and for the development of social networks, but also as a site of potential discrimination, as later sections of this report show.

The feelings of belonging experienced by multicultural young people in local spaces and educational institutions did not translate to the workplace, where only 59.2% experienced belonging.

### Belonging-in-difference

Multicultural youth have a strong sense of their own cultural identity and distinctiveness, but also take an interest in cultures other than their own. More than 4 in 5 of the sample said they sought out different cultural experiences (e.g., food and music) (83.8%) and also that it was important to maintain my cultural heritage (82%). Almost three quarters of the sample felt they belonged to more than one culture (73.3%).

“I would say the place where I feel most at ease in my community is community full of other people who feel displaced as well! So it is kind of we make just our own community of displaced people. ... Even if we are all from different walks of life, we have this sense of solidarity.”

“When I was a kid, I was about 10 years old, I moved three schools ... so my previous school was... there were a lot of multicultural people. But when I went to this new school, everyone there was White. So I felt intimidated as a kid. I mean that was a feeling that still remains with me.”

Interestingly, lower numbers of multicultural young people feel like they belong to an ethnic community in Australia (60.4%). This suggests that a general sense of belonging to different cultural groups, and **an attachment to one’s cultural heritage, does not necessarily depend on participation in formalised cultural groups or ethnic community associations.** Instead, the sample reflected a sense of cultural mobility, and the capacity for interaction between and across different cultural groups, rather than a strong attachment to any one culture. This refutes the

assumption often made in debates about multiculturalism and social cohesion that young refugee and migrant people do not properly ‘integrate’. Rather, as other research has suggested, it appears that multicultural young people are adept at moving flexibly through different cultural environments (Butcher and Thomas 2003; Harris 2012).

For some multicultural young people, this cultural mobility requires significant personal effort, balancing the expectations of very different cultural worlds.

“It’s that being in that dangerous grey area where you’re trying to balance all of these things, like you’re trying to please your parents or community or whatever by upholding certain values, but then at the same time you’re trying to connect with the wider community.”

Multicultural young people who experienced discrimination were significantly less likely to experience place-based belonging. This was true of those who had experienced discrimination on the basis of gender, race, sexuality, age and/or disability.

Those who had a strong sense of their own cultural identity and difference were more likely to experience discrimination based on race and religion. This may be because those who answered positively to the questions on cultural heritage and ethnic community belonging were more likely to possess visible markers of ethnic or religious difference.

## CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship – both formal and informal – is an important indicator of one’s belonging in a culturally diverse society. Citizenship is normally understood in terms of belonging to a nation state, however, one might also identify as a local citizen or a global citizen. Citizenship can be understood as the sum total of one’s capacity to participate in culture, and to claim social, cultural and political rights.

Informal expressions of citizenship can involve cultural and political practices that do not require one to be a legal citizen – such as protesting, posting news on social media, involvement in community groups or other cultural activities. The term ‘cultural citizenship’ can be used to describe these informal citizenship practices. Cultural citizenship is a useful concept because it describes the multiple attachments that young people have while negotiating their position within local, national and global spaces.









## Participation in political activity

Multicultural young people demonstrate high levels of civic and political engagement. About three quarters of the sample had participated in one or more of the following activities in the last 12 months:

- Signed a petition or an online campaign (31.7%)
- Expressed an opinion on social media about an issue they cared about (27.5%)
- Thought ethically about products they buy (23.7%)
- Attended a protest or demonstration (10.3%)
- Contacted a politician about an issue they cared about (8.4%)

Some multicultural young people felt a responsibility to stay informed about issues that mattered to them, and were confident speaking up about these issues.

“At the back of my mind I feel comfortable speaking about things now which might not have been for people who were here in 90s and 80s, so I think that’s really positive as well. I don’t know if that’s because of my personal experiences and stuff, but I have been allowed to have debates with people, but I feel safe when I speak up!”

“I think it is mostly just how government run things or policies, in particular, that I feel I don’t agree. For example, treatment of refugees or treatment against Aboriginal or Indigenous people, anything I feel is against equity ... Personally, for me, I hope to be very socially aware, so I always try to make sure I am up to date, I have a general gist of what’s going on. ... When I am with my friends, making sure that if I don’t agree, I need to make sure I [up]hold my values. ... It’s like for example, my friends can make jokes, but then you reflect on it, it becomes quite distasteful. Like, they make jokes that is humour, but it can come off as being racist. ... Being proactive is also very important. Like making sure that I can make most of my capacity... yeah, how I can help.”

Although the multicultural youth sample scored lower than the Scanlon Foundation’s general population sample for most forms of political participation, these **levels of informal citizenship and political engagement among multicultural youth are still remarkable given their age and the relatively short period they have been in Australia** (almost two thirds of the sample were aged 15 to 19 and more than half had been living in Australia for less than 5 years).

Many multicultural young people were also involved in various other kinds of civic and group activity as a platform for political expression and engagement. Much of this activity was undertaken on a volunteer basis. These activities included participation in:

- Volunteer work (32.1%)
- Youth leadership initiatives (e.g., youth councils, youth reference groups, youth led groups or organisations) (20.6%)
- Student leadership activities (19.8%)
- Youth groups and clubs (18.2%)
- Environmental group/activity (12.7%)
- Political groups/associations (9.3%)

Overall levels of civic activity for the MY Australia sample were slightly lower than the Mission Australia sample. However, given the additional settlement barriers faced by multicultural young people, these results still reflect a high level of participation.

As well as these more traditional forms of civic participation, **multicultural young people regularly used social media to engage politically.**

Half of multicultural young people said they use social media to keep informed about social or political issues (50.8%) while 1 in 5 said they inform others about social or political issues through social media (20.9%).

These findings on civic and political participation refute preconceptions about multicultural youth apathy and low levels of participation in mainstream civic life, often shaping public debates about social cohesion (Harris and Roose 2014). By contrast, these young people demonstrate a range of ways in which they participate in civic life, volunteer in community oriented activity, and use their social media networks to engage with issues they care about.

## CULTURAL PARTICIPATION

There are many ways in which multicultural young people participate in Australian cultural life. The cultural participation domain seeks to describe these different forms and spaces of participation, and the diverse cultural practices which help young people to build and inhabit their worlds. These cultural activities can range from engagement with the arts, digital media participation, activities in the home, in public spaces and community facilities, as well as in commercial venues.

The capacity to participate in different aspects of cultural life can be an important contributor to belonging and cultural citizenship.

A third of multicultural young people had participated in arts, cultural or music activities in the past year (34.3%).

There were similarly high levels of involvement in sports – either as an active participant (31.3%) or as a spectator (25.7%).

Attendance at religious activities (including community celebrations or events) in the past year was also high (31.3%).

The role of diverse forms of cultural participation in facilitating citizenship and belonging was highlighted in the qualitative research. Respondents described how they experienced belonging through a range of activities, including ‘being a nerd’, participating in community groups and civic programs such as youth advocacy networks, ‘progressive political movements’, and arts and theatre groups.

“I really never had any sort of support system and throughout all high school I was quite an angry... like I was quite an angry person; I didn't really know how to I guess display the things that were going on internally. ... It was very difficult I guess for me to express myself and the only way I knew how was through theatre.”

**Multicultural young people also attend a range of cultural venues and events, suggesting they are open to diverse forms of cultural experience, expression and engagement.**

The most common form of arts engagement was attending the cinema – 61% of multicultural youth had been to the movies in the past year. More than one third said they went along to local community events (39.8%), suggesting the importance of cultural spaces in local neighbourhoods.

Another third stated that they had attended an art gallery or museum in the past year (36.4%). Around one quarter had been to concerts (28.7%), live music shows or DJs (25.6%), zoos and aquariums (25.6%), or theatre or dance performances (25.4%).

More than 1 in 5 stated that they attended public lectures and networking events, reflecting multicultural young people's interest in self-education and self-improvement (22.2%).

Other spaces that are important to multicultural youth for relaxing and socialising included parks and beaches (52.1%), shopping centres (49.1%), and cafes and restaurants (43.1%). This **highlights the importance of ensuring these public and commercial spaces are inclusive and accessible to young, culturally diverse people.**

### Social media

Social media was also an important platform for multicultural young people to participate in cultural activity and build creative networks. Rather than cutting them off from the ‘real world’, **young people's social media activity extended their ‘real world’ networks and helped to facilitate a range of social and creative pursuits.**

Almost half of the sample stated that they used social media to post/share photos (44.2%), while almost one third (29.6%) used social media sites such as Soundcloud, Tumblr or Youtube so they could be involved in creative networks.

The online groups and networks that multicultural young people found belonging in were diverse: vegan groups, makeup groups for women of colour and gaming communities, were some examples offered.

Social media was also an important way for most young people to hear about local events (39.4% used social media for this purpose).

## CAPACITIES

Capacities include the resources and forms of knowledge that empower multicultural young people to participate in cultural life and experience a sense of belonging. Participation and capacity have a reciprocal relationship – the greater one's cultural capacities, the better equipped one is to participate in a range of cultural activity. At the same time, participation itself helps one to acquire cultural capacities.

Acquiring these capacities can help young people become more mobile, moving beyond narrowly defined social groups, and providing them with the resources to shape the dominant culture. Capacities can include language skills, cross-cultural literacy, social networks and institutional knowledge.

### English language skills

The sample of multicultural young people in the MY Australia Census had **high levels of English language proficiency**. Over 90% of people surveyed said they could speak (93.8%), understand (95.9%), read (95.3%) and/or write (93.5%) English ‘well’ or ‘very well’.

It should be noted that this question reflects subjective self-assessment of one's English language skills rather than an objective measure. Nevertheless, this is a high level of overall English language proficiency, and likely reflects the level of English language literacy required to complete the survey. When we remove those who were born in Australia or in other mainly English speaking countries (primarily New Zealand), the level of English language competency is still very high – over 90% state they can either speak, understand, read and/or write English ‘well’ or ‘very well’.

**The qualitative research reached many young people with lower levels of English language proficiency,**

who cited language capacity as a significant barrier to participation and belonging.

“If one person from Australia asks me ‘you’re from another country’, I say ‘no, I’m from Australia because now I live in Australia!’... [But] I can’t say I’m from Australia because my language is very bad! ... If you don’t have language you don’t have anything in Australia.”

**Barriers to cultural participation**

**Financial difficulties were the most common reason why multicultural young people did not** participate in these cultural and leisure activities as much as they liked (53.9%).

**Multicultural young people are also very busy** – almost half stated that they do not have enough time to get involved in these cultural activities (47.7%). Young people in this sample are also busy participating in a range of civic activities.

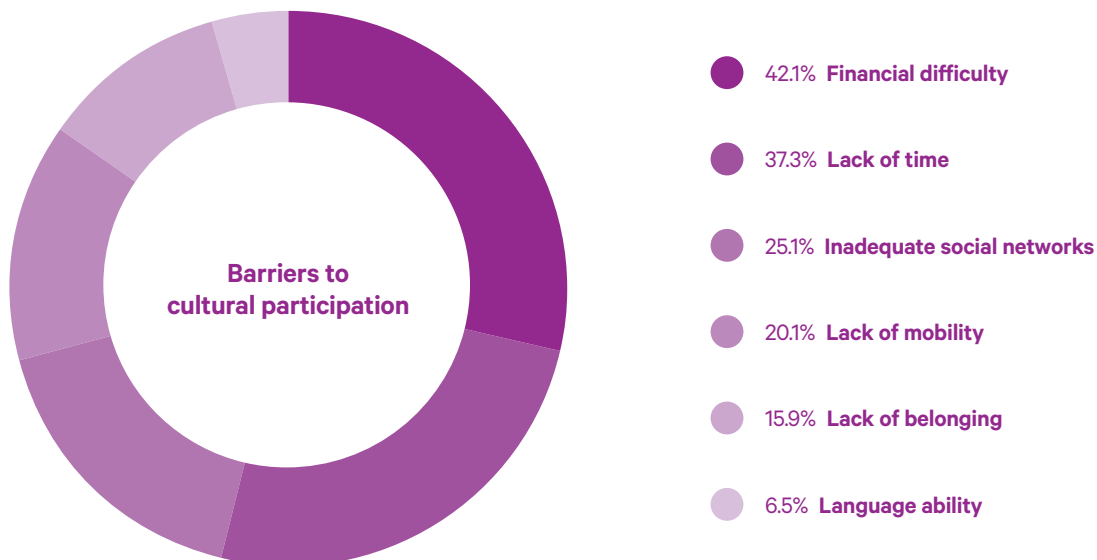
Qualitative research also revealed how **family expectations can be a barrier to social and cultural participation.**

“Whenever I go to any of my friends’, my parents’ first question is like ‘why? Are you gonna do something?’ No we are just going to sit on the bed and text other people, like that’s just what we do. Why, why you have to be doing something, it’s like everything we do has to be for a reason, we can’t just go and hang out with our friends. So it makes those kind of things harder like because you need that full transparency with your parents as well. So it’s just sitting at home and do nothing.”

“I think because our parents are from like... in India you obviously cannot walk around by yourself in some areas when you’re a girl. They bring that back here as well. And obviously there are [unsafe] areas here too, but it’s widely different.”

Other barriers that stopped multicultural young people from participating in activities are presented in the chart below.

**Table 2.1 Barriers to cultural participation**



## RACE, ETHNICITY AND IDENTITY

Race and ethnicity are important cultural markers that shape young people's identity, belonging and wellbeing. Race and ethnicity are politically charged categories that can lead to experiences of discrimination. Young people's identities can also result from intersections of multiple categories such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, (dis)ability, religion or age.

### Discrimination and racism

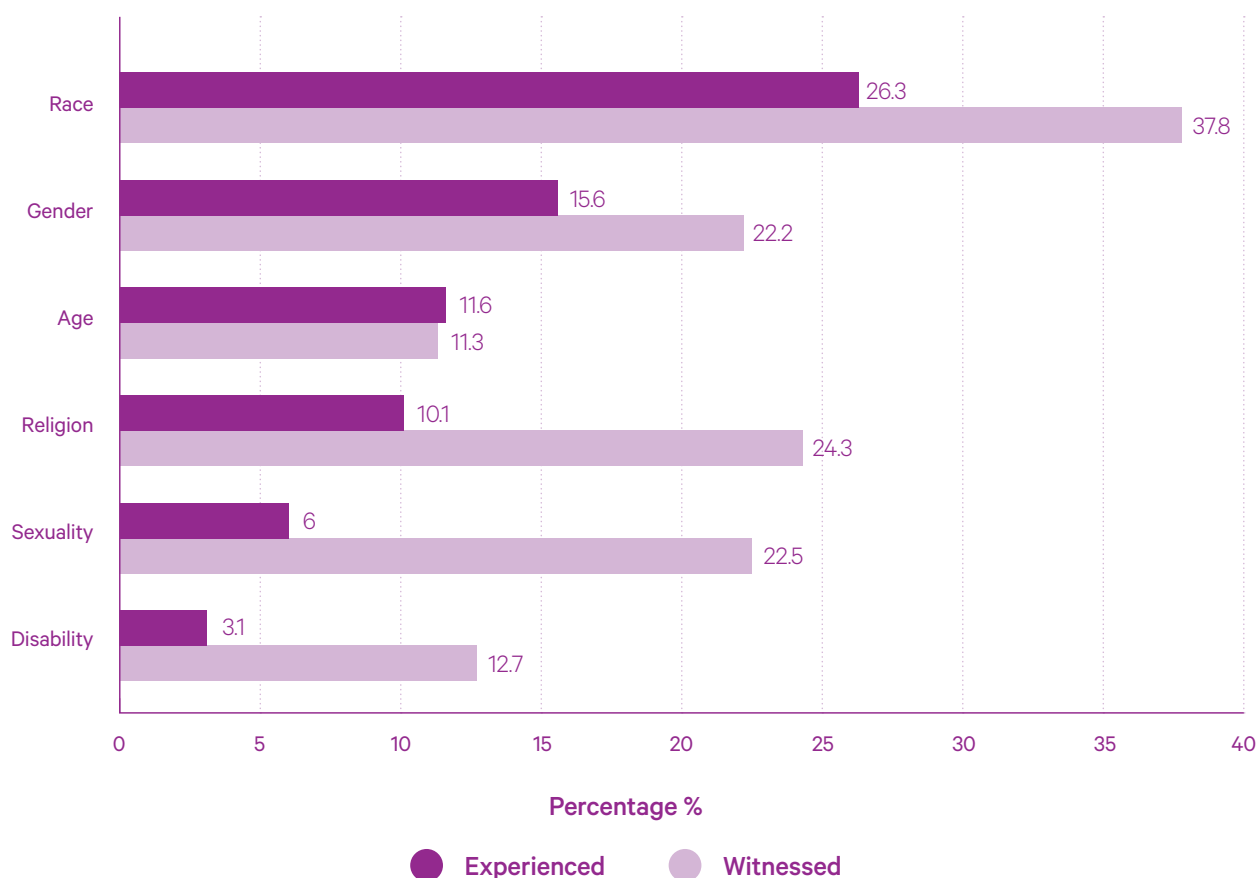
The MY Australia Census sample was asked about discrimination in an overall sense – that is, whether they had experienced/witnessed discrimination on the basis of gender, race, sexuality, religion, age or disability. This reflects the complexity of young people's experiences of exclusion, discrimination or harassment, which may relate to more than one aspect of their identity.

**Almost half of multicultural young people had experienced some form of discrimination or unfair treatment in the last 12 months (48.7%).** An even higher proportion – almost two thirds – had witnessed someone else being unfairly treated or discriminated against (63.5%).

The sample was also asked to identify the type of discrimination they had experienced or witnessed. **Two thirds of those who had experienced discrimination indicated that this was because of their race (65.7%), while one quarter was discriminated against because of religion (25.3%).** The majority of those who had witnessed discrimination felt that it was on the basis of race (72%), while high numbers had also observed discrimination due to religion (46.3%), sexuality (42.9%) and gender (42.4%).

The chart below presents the types of discrimination experienced and witnessed among the entire sample of multicultural young people.

Table 2.2 Discrimination experienced / witnessed among total sample





The proportion of the entire MY Australia Census sample who experienced discrimination on the basis of race was 26.3%. This is comparable to the Scanlon Foundation's Social Cohesion survey which found that 20% of the general population had experienced discrimination on the basis of 'skin colour, ethnic origin or race' (Markus 2017). The Scanlon Foundation study notes an overall increase in experiences of racial discrimination in the past decade, with the 2016 results showing the highest level of racial discrimination since its first study in 2007, possibly because of shifts in the wider political climate. **This is an issue of significant concern and points to a major barrier in successful settlement and belonging for multicultural young people.**

The quotes below describe young people's experiences of discrimination on the basis of race and religion, in a range of contexts.

“There is one time, a long time ago, so I was walking with my cousin around this area. There is this one guy, I think he was drunk. I just ignored him because he was drunk. We were just walking and he was like 'go back to where you come from!' I was like 'stop!' and then he just walked off.”

“At the beginning [when we first arrived in Australia], there was a lot of issues. Others would joke and laugh at us because we couldn't speak good English.

Interviewer: Where did this happen?

In school, on the street, in the park...

For example, a few would approach us and ask us something. If they knew that we couldn't speak good English, they would mock us. We could understand what they were saying...

Interviewer: What did they used to say?

They call us 'refugees' and say 'go back to your country!' It was humiliating. ...Once in the swimming pool in the toilet, I spat. Someone told me 'this is not your country, you cannot do this!'”

“Even in corporate events, even though they are professionals and stuff... We had a great Gatsby event last Wednesday; a man was like 'you look happy for a Muslim!' I'm like, 'What?' He's like, 'you look very happy for a Muslim!' ... I feel like they forget we are humans and we have emotions.”

“I never wear Hijab. During Ramadan, I put on Hijab. I was waiting at the bus station. A girl was smoking in front of me. I looked at her. She lit her cigarette. She insulted me, and I replied. My English is good, so I could understand what she said. But if your English is not that good, you wouldn't. People shouldn't think that you're different because you wear Hijab.”

“My sister, when she went to the hairdresser, she asked the hairdresser 'I want to cut with this lady', but she says 'You can't because she is busy!' My sister says I will come tomorrow or give me an appointment another day. She will go and ask her and she comes back, 'No, she will not do it!' Then my sister realises that we wear scarf that's why she ignored and does not want to cut.”

“We were gonna go to the state library and have picnic and stuff, and then the police pulled us apart and started checking our bags and going through. ... They were only targeting African people. All the other people walking past, normally, nothing was happening. It was just us, we just realised it was messed up!”

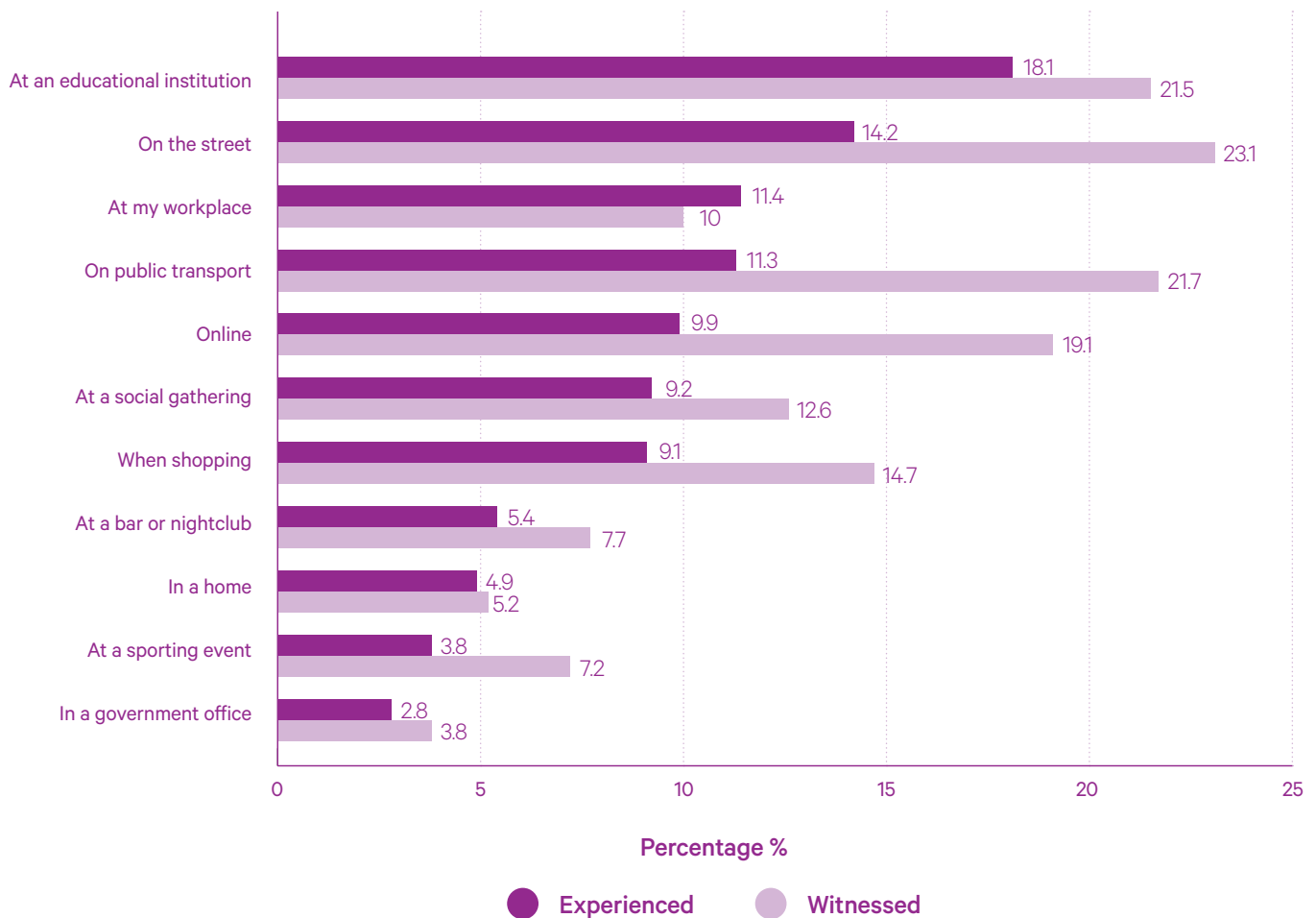
“One day I remember I finished my shift at work. So, when I get out, I found a mate, a brother, from the same country. So, we start speaking our language. We were speaking Swahili. So, there is White people there, they come. And we're speaking our language. They start telling us: 'Shut up! Shut up!' I asked them why they told us to shut up. So, they got angry because they thought we were Arabs. That is not good, that is racism! ... They tell us, 'speak English!'”

**Discrimination took place at a range of sites, including in public space, as well as at work and educational institutions.**

The most common places where discrimination took place were at educational institutions and on the street. However, as the quotes below suggest, both direct and indirect forms of racism and stereotyping took place at a range of sites. Qualitative research revealed schools, shopping centres and public transport to be problematic areas.

**These findings reiterate the need for institutional responses to racism and discrimination in places of study and work, as well as strategies for mitigating racism and discrimination in public spaces.**

Table 2.3 Places where discrimination experienced / witnessed among total sample



### Racism and discrimination at school

“In high school, when you don't know how to speak English, they laugh at [you]... Discrimination of teacher, they say, 'Go back to your country!' For me, I experienced that. ... They say 'Go back to your country, you're too dark!'”

“In my school... high school... if you do your assignment, for example. You have your friends, you do your assignment and your teacher likes your friend than you. So, the teacher is gonna give you either D or E! I'm not gonna pass because... Also, not treating people with dignity... mostly from school.”

“The school I used to go to, there was a lot of racism there. People used to say to us to go back to our country... those sorts of comments. [...] we went to the principal office and we talked about it, and it decreased a bit. It didn't stop completely.”

### Racism and discrimination in shopping centres

“Another place that I don't feel as comfortable in, and I am sure if I didn't wear headscarf, I would feel comfortable in is like a supermarket like Coles. ... There

was this one time that me and my two other friends got kicked out of MCL for simply the colour of our skin. ... [My friend] was trying different outfits and I was helping her by finding outfits. ... The [shopkeeper] was like, 'You girls have been too loud! You are scaring my customers away'. ... She took the stuff from [my friend]. ... She literally said something like 'Your people always steal! I was getting very frustrated because I have never done something like that. I can't even take a dollar coin from my parents' car without asking. ... She started saying 'I'm calling security, I'm calling security! I don't want you back here! I just had enough. ... And then we went downstairs... because it wasn't the first time it happened. It happened to my other friends quite a few times in Myer. So, they got sick of it because it always happens to us. [...] We went downstairs to the information centre to see what we can do about reporting MCL and basically, they didn't give us any information. ... It's never gonna change. We have reported them so many times and nothing has happened.’”

“I hate being at the shopping centre. I don't know... they are very annoying; they just follow everyone.

And some people get like mad at that and then do something stupid.



They have weird security; they're all pretty weird.

It is just us; they would follow us Africans around. ... They just probably think something bad is gonna happen when they see a big group of people. ... Stereotyping!

You don't feel like welcomed. ”

### **Racism and discrimination on public transport**

“I mean people feel uncomfortable in our presence. Like it's just annoying; they think we're gonna do something bad to them. You know when you go past them, they're gonna hold their bags tighter or move away from you, or do something to make you feel uncomfortable.”

### **Multicultural young people described a range of responses to racism and discrimination.**

“Whenever I see a Muslim getting picked on, or just in general, or I feel like someone is yelling at someone for their race or their religion, I have to stand up because I want them to know that you can't do that. If I stand up, they know that they're gonna get a response next time they do it. But they usually go for the ones that they think they don't speak English. So that they cannot reply.”

“Most of the time I let it go! I think it's better if you let it go, because... for example when someone swears at me, and then I just give them a look. They will feel ashamed of what they have said.”

“If I was a bystander, I don't know how I would react because there is that risk 'Oh, if I get involved, it might make things worse' or 'How much I get involved?' or 'Would I be able to change that thinking in a way?' My limit is to make sure that person is safe. If it's verbal abuse... I don't know... I have not thought much about it, but I think I would step in if it evolves into anything that is more physical.”

“It was my friend and I. We were going to our class. Two people approached us. He pushed my friend. I asked him, 'What's your problem?!' He came towards me and pushed me too. I stayed calm. He pushed me up against the wall. He was four times my size. He said, 'fight me!' I said, 'I am not interested!' He said, 'I kill you, terrorist!' ”

“Even if someone says something bad, I wouldn't react. I just smile and move on.”



# 03 SOCIAL INDICATORS



## SOCIAL INDICATORS

### DOMAINS

**Social networks**  
**Values and goals**  
**Confidence and optimism**

Multicultural young people's quality of life depends on the strength of their social networks. These networks are comprised of family, friends and wider forms of institutional access and connection.

Social indicators assess the strength and composition of these networks, and their contribution to wider economic and cultural outcomes. There is a need to understand multicultural young people's experiences of social exclusion and marginality, as well as comfort and safety. Social indicators highlight where multicultural young people turn to for support, and how relationships of trust are developed through an array of networks and social spaces – including participation in social media, sports, cultural activity or religion. Social indicators reveal issues of personal concern to multicultural young people, as well as their engagement with issues of community concern.

### SOCIAL NETWORKS

Multicultural young people are involved in a diverse array of networks, both formal (schools, government agencies and non government support services) and informal (family and friends). This domain examines the strength and composition of these networks, and how multicultural young people develop these networks.

### Housing and living situation

The MY Australia Census sample was evenly split between those who lived in a home owned by them/their family (48.8%) and those who lived in a rental property (48.2%). Only 3.1% lived in supported accommodation such as public housing or social housing.

Three quarters of the sample lived with parents or guardians (76.7%). 8.3% lived with housemates or friends, and 8% lived with a partner. Only 2.3% lived alone.

### Family relationships

Overall, the MY Australia Census sample got along well with other family members. **Four out of five young people either got along with their family 'always' (42.7%), or 'most of the time' (40.2%).** Many research participants expressed close ties with family, emphasising the importance of family as a source of support and friendship.

Despite these strong relationships, qualitative research participants also described pressures and complex family dynamics that shaped their experiences.



**For many, commitment to family involved a deep sense of respect, responsibility and obligation.**

“ I am living with my parents. We are five people in my family. I have two sisters, my dad and my mother and we love each other. We have no problem. Anything I earn from my salary is theirs; I will share with them. My father too, same. ... We love each other. We have a good relationship with each other. Even if some problems happen, we are discussing about it. We are solving it. If we have any plans, we will discuss it. ... They [my parents] try to help me in every situation of my life. They help me in any situation, giving money or helping, in everything. They help me. It is my responsibility when they get older and older I should care about them. They are happy. We are a happy family.”

“ The biggest thing you know... I am thinking about supporting my family... to get [them] like accommodation, a house or something so they can relax because mum and dad grew up us. It is time for us to support them because they cannot speak English. I am the person in the family who can speak a little better English; I'm the person working. I have to support them.”

At times this sense of responsibility created intergenerational tension – when young people felt they were unable to meet family expectations or obligations.

“ My siblings definitely understand [me] because they've had stuff that they wanted to do, they never ended up doing and they ended up doing other things. ... It's just my parents that have this view in their head that you have to go into something like biomedical sciences or law or anything of that sort.”

Girls in particular described the pressures of gendered family expectations.

“ If I want to go out with friends, they [my parents] want to make sure they know who I am going out with. They don't want me to go out too often. Also, if I haven't done my homework, then that's definitely no! ... It can get annoying because I know that they are constantly on my case. But I know that they want to make sure that I am safe and that I am coming back. I know that they just do it out of safety.”

“ Girls have more expectations, clean before you leave the house, things like that. Boys just they leave, they come back when they want. They are not really questioned about it. ... [B]aby sitting, looking after siblings, all those things... Boys don't have that responsibility.”

Young people described the conflicts caused by not sharing the same values or cultural attachments as older generations.

“ I think for me it's really hard because most of Pakistanis around Perth, they're really like focusing on the culture back home and so like they don't understand that they have to kind of be a bit more like amalgamating in society ... [W]e cannot talk to our elders; we have to respect them to the extent that we have to like not talk about our opinions. It's just complicated that you feel like you cannot actually talk to anyone apart from the younger people, but all the younger people are now drifting away from the older Pakistanis. Even the ones that actually do come into community gatherings, they're the ones who never talk or communicate to their parents about what issues affect them. So ... I just feel like it's gonna lead to a lot of alienation of young people from their cultural communities.”

## Friends

Just over half of the MY Australia Census sample said most of their friends came from a similar cultural background to them (53%) while just less than half disagreed with this statement (47%).

This finding suggests there is significant diversity in the kinds of social networks multicultural young people draw on. As has been noted in other studies, social interaction across diverse cultural groupings is normal and unremarkable for many migrant and refugee youth (Harris 2012), however the findings of the MY Australia Census revealed a number of factors that influenced young people's likelihood to mix with those from other cultural backgrounds.

The propensity to mix with people from different cultural backgrounds was influenced by **gender**. Males were significantly more likely to have friends from a similar cultural background than females (57% compared with 51% of females who 'agreed' with the statement).

**Country of birth** was also a significant factor. It was easier for Australian born young people (and those born in mainly English speaking countries) to make friends from different backgrounds than those born in non-English speaking countries (41% of Australian born youth had friends from a similar background compared with 60% from a non English speaking background).



**Age.** As people got older their networks also became more diverse. Multicultural young people aged 15 to 19 were more likely to say their friends came from the same cultural background (55%) than those aged 20 to 25 (49%).

**Length of time in Australia.** The longer young people had lived in Australia the more likely they were to make friends from culturally diverse backgrounds (53% of those who lived in Australia for more than 5 years had diverse friends compared with 36% of newer migrants).

Qualitative research highlighted how **language barriers** also made it difficult for some multicultural young people to make friends with those who only spoke English, although some of these young people could still access diverse friendship groups through their English language classes.

The **cultural diversity of schools and educational institutions** was a key factor in shaping the diversity of multicultural young people's friendship groups.

“Well at school I never really like... I wasn't friends with anyone from Pakistan or who was Muslim or anything like that. Just friends with all those like White people. But like yeah... when I started uni, I did make a lot more friends that were Muslim ... ”

“When I went to university, I met with so many people who were Muslim and I felt... I felt I could connect much better to myself, who I was. I could relate much better and I think, I gained confidence. I had a better sense of identity.”

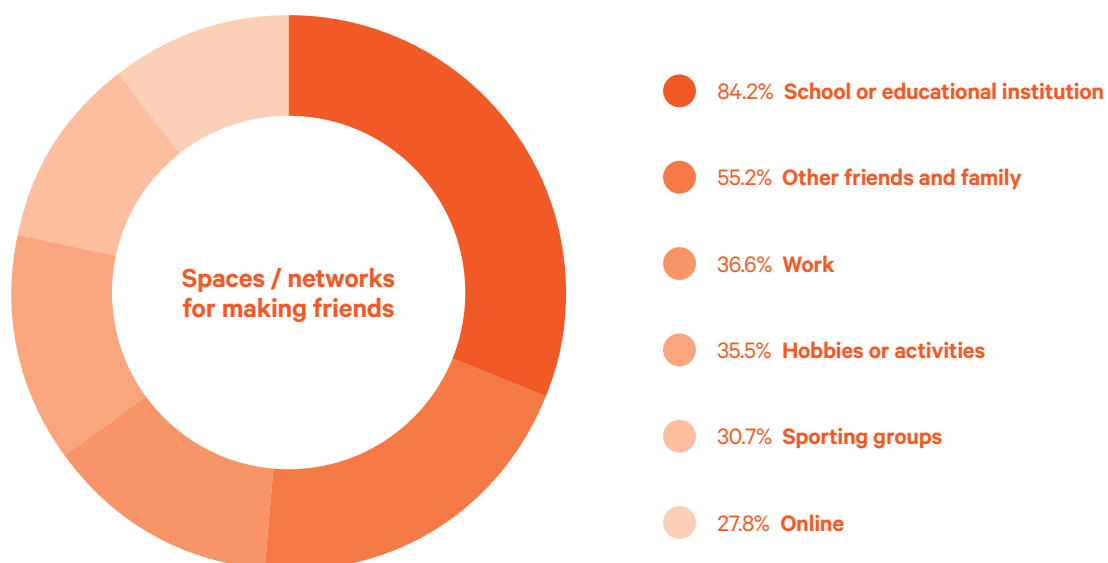
“They are very supportive, especially like my ESL teacher. There is like a few migrants, like Brazilian and Vietnamese. ... Probably that's why like I am not really scared. Otherwise, I was really scared because I was like 'oh I don't know anyone here, what's gonna happen to me?' But once I started school and there is like a few migrant students, and they have ESL as well.”

“I find it pretty hard to make friend with Australians. I feel it is more difficult to make friends with them. I can make friends with someone who speaks English as second language because they understand like what we go through.”

### Accessing social networks

Multicultural young people made friends through a range of spaces and networks. Organised and institutional spaces for young people, such as education or community based groups, were especially important. Both local, physical spaces and online spaces were also very important to young people.

Table 3.1 Spaces / networks for making friends



At least 1 in 5 also indicated that they made their friends through:

- Youth groups (27.5%)
- Ethnic /cultural activities or groups (26.7%)
- Religious groups or activities (26.3%)
- In their neighbourhood (25.4%)

Multicultural young people are **strongly connected with overseas family and friends through the internet**. More than two thirds indicated that they use social media to keep in contact with family and friends overseas weekly or more often (68.6%). This includes over one quarter who were online for these reasons everyday (27.1%).

Keeping in contact with family and friends was also reported to be the most common reason people used social media (89% of the sample mentioned this overall). The other main reasons why multicultural young people used social media were to post/share photos (57.3%); to hear about local events (51.1%); and to keep informed about social or political issues (50.8%).

“Everyone uses social media. I use Facebook, Instagram, Telegram, Viber, Snapchat, etc. There are many. [...] I chat with my friends. I cannot find my friends from Iran, but I chat with other friends who I have found online. We share with each other and talk about how things are.”

**When asked whether they could easily find someone to spend time with, less than half of the sample (43.4%) said that they ‘definitely’ could**, while more than 1 in 10 responded ‘no, not really’. Just under half said that they could ‘sometimes’ find someone to spend time with (44.5%).

The length of time young people had spent in Australia and English language skills influenced their ability to access social networks. First generation migrants had weaker social ties than those born in Australia. Those who had been in Australia for more than 5 years were significantly more likely to find people to spend time with, compared with newer migrants (50% could ‘definitely’ find someone, versus 32%). Those born in non-English speaking countries were significantly less likely than Australian born young people to say they could ‘definitely’ find someone to spend time with (39% compared with 54%).

The ability to access these social networks is also related to age. School aged young people were significantly more likely to say they could ‘definitely’ find someone to spend time with than those aged 20 to 25 (46% compared with 38%).

## SEEKING HELP

**Around half of respondents said they could ‘definitely’ find someone to help them if they were in trouble**, while about one tenth (11.8%) responded with ‘no, not really’. This tenth of the sample indicates a notable level of risk and vulnerability among multicultural youth. This question is also context specific – multicultural young people find this a difficult question to answer without knowing what they are actually seeking help for.

**Young people’s help-seeking behaviour was also influenced by whether someone was born in Australia, their length of time in Australia, and English language background**. Australian born young people were much more likely to find help when they needed it – 61% could



'definitely' find someone when in trouble, compared with 55% of those from mainly English speaking countries, and only 44% of those born in non-English speaking countries. Those who arrive in Australia from countries where English is not the main language are significantly disadvantaged when building necessary social networks.

The ability to find help was affected by how long young people had spent living in Australia. More than half of those who had lived in Australia for more than 5 years could 'definitely' find someone to help them than newer migrants (56% compared with 39%).

**When asked who they would go to for help with important issues in their lives, multicultural youth were more likely to call on friend/s (63.7%) or parent/s (61.2%).** Almost half said they would turn to siblings (41.7%) and one third would go to relatives or family friends (33.8%). One quarter stated they would ask their partner (boyfriend or girlfriend) for help (25.3%).

**Receiving help or support was particularly difficult for migrant and refugee youth who lived apart from their families.**

“It is really hard. I grew up with my family. When I came to Australia, I felt so unhappy; I felt lonely because no one was beside me. For example, if I was sick in my country,

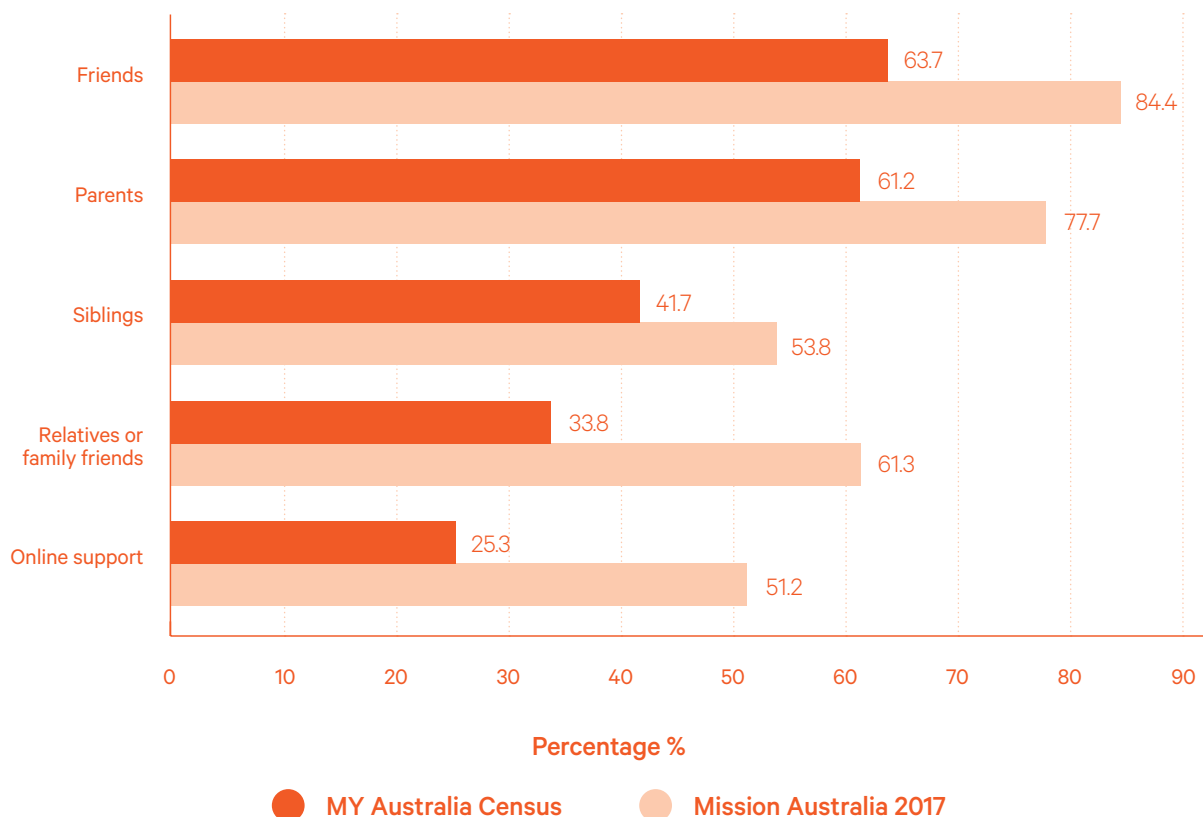
my mum would say 'how are you?' your brother, sister, everyone [would do the same]... But here you go to hospital, I know, they do well taking care of everyone, [but] you still feel like something inside, 'oh where is my sister, my brother'.”

Although one quarter of young people said they would look on the internet for help (25.3%), only a small proportion would look up an online counselling website (6.8%) or telephone hotline (5.3%).

Multicultural young people showed some degree of trust in educational institutions, with one quarter saying they would go to their teacher for help with important issues (25.8%). There were lower levels of engagement with other kinds of institutions – only 9.8% said they would go to a religious leader and 5.2% would go to a community leader.

As the chart below illustrates, this overall ranking of sources from which young people seek help is similar to Mission Australia's findings for the 15 to 19 year old population. However, while the trends were comparable, the overall frequency of help seeking from most sources was lower for the multicultural youth sample. This seems to suggest that **despite similar help-seeking preferences, multicultural young people may not have access to as wide a social network as the general population.**

Table 3.2 Help-seeking preferences



## SAFETY

Just under two thirds (62.4%) of the sample said they feel safe or very safe when walking alone at night in their local area. However, this means over one third (37.6%) feel either unsafe (29.2%) or very unsafe (8.4%).

This is a similar finding to the Scanlon Foundation's Social Cohesion surveys in which 66.3% of the general population said they feel safe or very safe and just less than one third (28.9%) feel unsafe or very unsafe (Markus 2017). Feelings of safety also have a statistically significant relationship with gender – females were 3.7 times more likely to feel unsafe walking alone at night in their local area than males.

“It's not that I don't feel that I belong, but it's kind of I feel unsafe at night time. ... Probably about two years ago, there was a lot of things going on around this area. Sometimes like if you go to train station, some people ask for money or they get like a punch. Some people get their phone stolen, their wallet stolen... like they just snatch and then they run away, stuff like that, horrible stories. ... [M]ost of my classes are luckily during day time.”

For some, feelings of cultural insecurity and a lack of belonging contributed to feelings of physical insecurity and fear.

“During the first few months when I arrived in Hobart, I was very scared. For the first months, I was scared to go out. Whenever I was out of home, I had a feeling that someone will attack me. But over time, it got better.”

“We have been here for one year and a half, but we still don't feel safe here. We don't quite feel like we belong here. We are doing our best, but we still feel scared. [...] We came here with a lot of hope. When we arrived and realised things are different, we started feeling sad. We were placed in community houses which were not clean at all.”

## VALUES, CONCERNS AND GOALS

### Most important issues in Australia

Multicultural young people were asked what they believed were the most important issues in Australia today. The top 3 issues that emerged were 1) diversity and discrimination; 2) education; and 3) jobs and employment.

These issues contrast with the top 3 issues identified by the Mission Australia study: alcohol and drugs (28.7%); equity and discrimination (27%); and mental health (20.6%). This was the first year mental health was identified as one of the top 3 issues in Australia (MA 2017, p.4). Again, it should be noted that the Mission Australia sample included 15 to 19 year olds only.

Samples of descriptions of the 'most important issues' are presented below. The comments reflect a distinctly civic outlook – they relate not only to multicultural young people's personal circumstances and experiences but describe the wider political and communal settings they participate in.



Most important issues in Australia	Sample quotes
<b>1. Diversity and Discrimination</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The most important issue today in Australia is that not Australian want Muslims or refugee people in their country and without knowing us from our hearts they define Muslims as terrorists, which is not true.</li> <li>Validated racist rhetoric and the presence of discriminatory parties in government. This feeds into the disgusting treatment and policy on refugees and asylum seekers. This also affects the everyday interactions and processes we go through. I am a sixth generation Pakistani Australian but because I look different, speak multiple languages and have a funny name I'm often asked where are you from or how long have you been in Melbourne? This also feeds into jobs and the workplace, with myself and a lot of other young people feeling as though our voices and skills are not being recognised due to our names on a piece of paper.</li> <li>Acceptance of people who are not white Australians. Although we claim to be a very multicultural country, which we are, there is still so much racism and discrimination happening.</li> <li>A lack of understanding amongst the general population of how white privilege (and many other forms of privilege: being male, cis gender, heterosexual, able bodied, middle class, neurotypical the list goes on and on) work to elevate a portion of the Australian population and oppress others.</li> <li>For me personally, the most important issue is cultural acceptance. It is something that I feel is on a decline and is doing so at a rapid pace. With the portrayal of different ethnic groups in the media it is changing the way we not only perceive one another but also they way that we treat each other. This happens both on a social level with everyday interactions and even on a political front with the limitations imposed by laws (and possible law's that may be passed) that restrict the freedoms and access to assistance we require to try and better ourselves and ultimately allow us to contribute back to the society and country that grants these freedoms.</li> <li>Australia's face is bright, bold, colourful and filled with a hunger to belong. Our diversity and multiculturalism is our strength, yet we struggle to accept one another, we fight to hate one another, and we live to divide one another. Belonging. We all want it but we don't do enough to keep it.</li> </ul>
<b>2. Education</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The ATAR system gives a lot of unnecessary pressure that's makes a lot of students anxious about their future when they don't need to be. The education system should be reformed in order to personalise education for every individual, to truly create progress and carve the pathway for our future generations.</li> <li>The inequities NZ citizens have to suffer even though there is a supposed 'trans tasman partnership'. NZ citizens are treated like second class citizens and are only recognised as citizens when it comes to paying tax. NZ'ers contribute to the society and get almost nothing in return. No HECS/student loans, and if the Higher Education Reform Package is passed by the senate, they will become international students at uni meaning triple the price of CSP fees.</li> <li>Education not only for youth but also for adults whether it be schooling, training putting adults who are looking for free courses in rural Australia to help benefit them to secure a job and make a better future.</li> <li>A big issue for me is not being able to go to university or tafe to study even though I've been living in Australia for 10+ years and did all my schooling here and the fact its nearly impossible to get citizenship unless you already have an amazing career straight out of high school.</li> <li>In Education, the criteria for admission into universities are hard and very competitive with other students. The newly arrivals with poor English skills are instead, studying at TAFE or/then Colleges for a few years, and to have enough eligibility to be accepted at the university.</li> <li>The most important issue in Australia is coming from non-English speaking background associated when education and cost of living. Coming from non-English speaking People can find it very hard to cope with their education because of not speaking English clearly. This can lead to reduced potential and not well results even though they have well knowledge</li> </ul>
<b>3. Jobs and employment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Less youth are able to get jobs, having to rely on parents and turning to crime to find and get money. I think more jobs should be introduced which are able to be for the youth to lower the unemployment rate.</li> <li>Ensuring that there are enough jobs generated for the younger generation in the tertiary sector economy, primarily in the service sector, such as Finance, hospitality, advisory, start ups, tech based companies etc.</li> <li>Youth in Australia struggle when it comes to finding jobs and homes. Buying a home requires a job and income. Getting nearly any well paying job in Australia requires a university degree. The degree you get from the ripoff university options here in Australia, that focus only on making money, leaves you in so much debt it's like starting the rat race with a ball and chain around your ankle.</li> <li>Because they do not speak English well, it's very rare to be accepted in professional jobs and use their knowledge to support the community and also financially themselves.</li> <li>The jobs and internships opportunities are abundant, however, they're highly competitive in the sense of requiring expertise in certain fields; and that's why many students are working in other irrelevant fields to their studied ones! Let alone, there is a big problem in recognising the overseas qualifications, and even not much of support for the examination fees handling.</li> </ul>



Most important issues of personal concern

When asked about issues of personal concern, multicultural young people ranked issues in the order presented in the chart below. The chart shows the proportion who were ‘extremely concerned’ about each issue.

The notable difference between the multicultural sample and the general youth sample relates to discrimination. Discrimination ranked as the second most important issue of personal concern for multicultural young people. Among the Mission Australia sample it was ninth most important.

Otherwise, the level of concern for various issues were similar for multicultural young people and the Mission Australia sample. The 3 issues of greatest personal concern for the Mission Australia sample were stress (20.4% ‘extremely concerned’); school or study problems (14.3%); and body image (13.1%).

Life goals and values

Multicultural young people were asked to indicate how important a range of life goals were to them. The graph on the right shows the percentage of those who said the life goal was of ‘very high importance’.

Table 3.4 Issues of personal concern

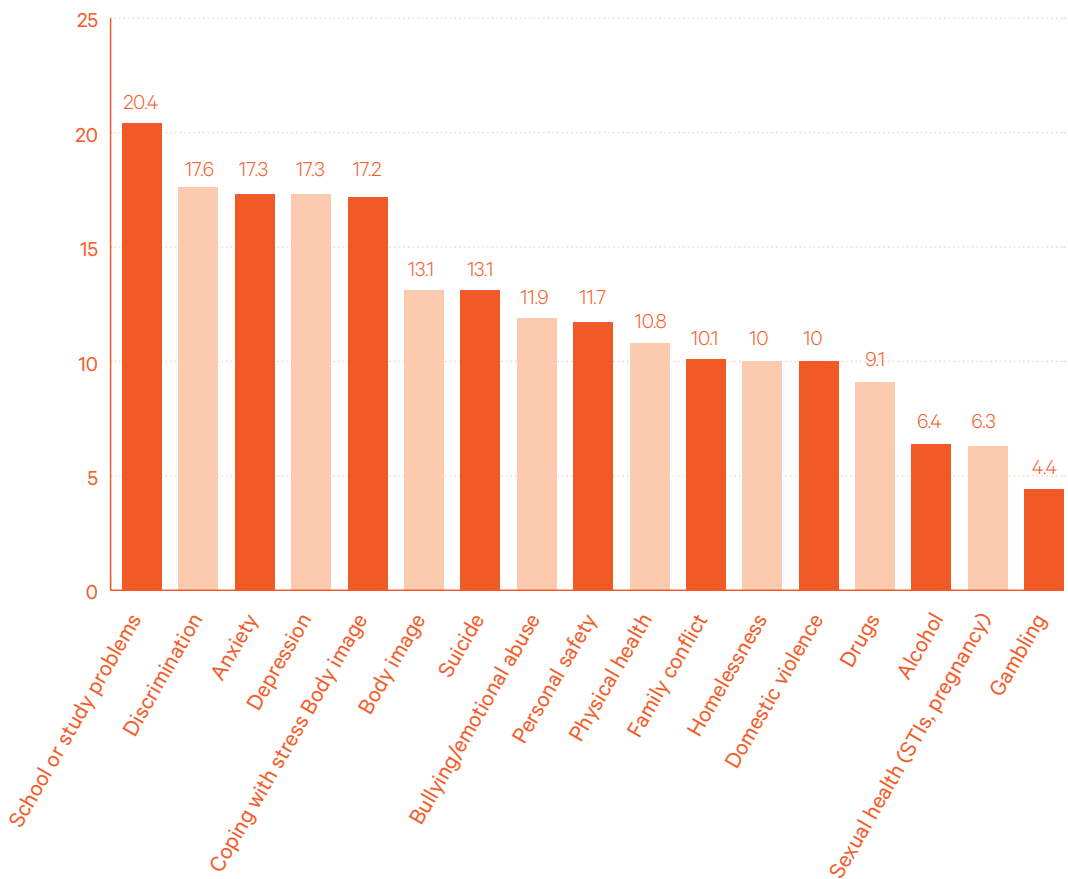
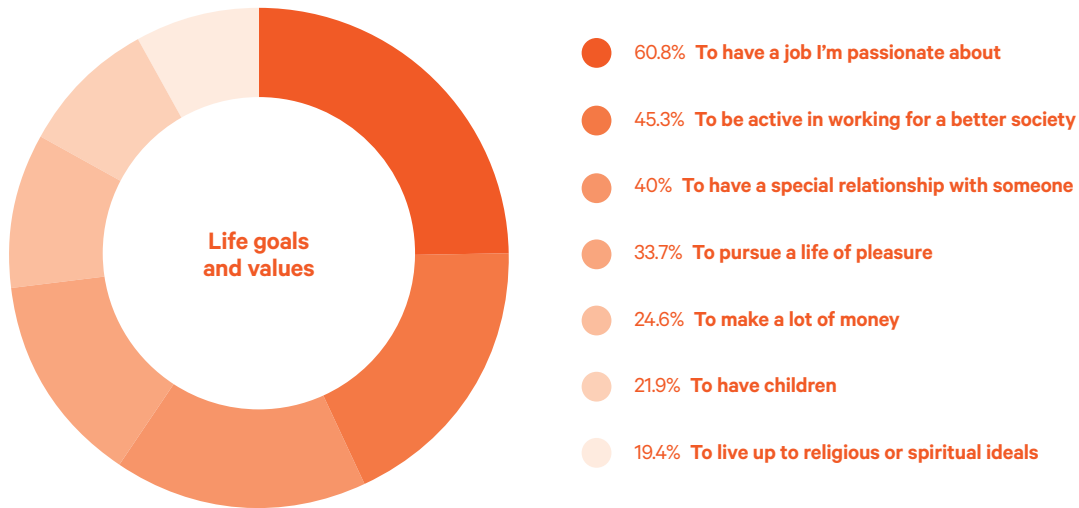


Table 3.5 Life goals and values



The MY Australia Census sample reflect a strong civic outlook, with many multicultural youth seeking fulfilment through work and contributing to social change. More individualistic goals – such as pleasure and money – were deemed less important.

While multicultural young people are concerned with making a contribution to society, this does not seem to be strongly tied to religious or spiritual ideals. And while they are interested in having a special relationship with someone, this is not motivated by a desire to start a family at this stage in their lives.

## CONFIDENCE

Young people have varying levels of confidence about achieving their work and study goals after finishing compulsory schooling. They also experience a range of perceived barriers that shape possibilities for their future.

### Confidence about achieving study/work goals

The majority of multicultural young people express confidence about their ability to achieve their work and study goals. More than half say they feel 'positive' about these future goals (58.6%), while another quarter is 'very positive' (27.5%).

In the qualitative research many multicultural youth expressed this optimism in terms of both personal goals, and the progress of society more generally.

“I feel like in the future, everyone's gonna be a lot more educated and a lot less scared of each other. Even with the media it's a lot more open discussion that the media is very biased and everyone is kind of a bit more aware of

that. There is obviously the older generation that are still like struggling to understand that, but I think it's like over time they are kind of like dying out.”

“People don't take us seriously because we are young but they forget to realize that we are the future. And so, I think like the fact that these things are kind of happening ... I am a very optimistic person, but I think like I don't know, I feel like things can change, you know. And then, the Right is becoming so... when I look at the whole wave of Trump and Pauline Hanson, is becoming so extreme that they're actually losing a lot of their initial support now. And so like if we can rein in on that I think that next few years will be really kind of chaotic, but after that I think things will level out and they kind of go towards progress I think!”

Confidence about future goals is higher for multicultural youth than the general youth population. Mission Australia's 2017 report shows that one third feel 'positive' (30.5%), while only 9.7% feel 'very positive'. This suggests that **despite the challenges faced by multicultural youth they retain a strong sense of optimism.**

This optimism about one's future in Australia is especially strong among new arrivals and those from non-English speaking countries. Those born in non-English speaking countries were considerably more likely to feel positive about achieving their future goals. **However, this sense of positivity declines significantly over time** – those who had been in Australia for more than 5 years were significantly less likely to feel confident about their future goals.

### Barriers to achieving study/work goals

The main barriers perceived by multicultural young people to achieving their study and work goals are presented in the chart below. Barriers for which there is no Mission Australia data indicate new questions that were formulated for the MY Australia Census.

**Overall, the proportions of multicultural young people who experienced each barrier were higher than the general youth population.** Multicultural young people were also more likely to cite a wider range of barriers than the general youth population.

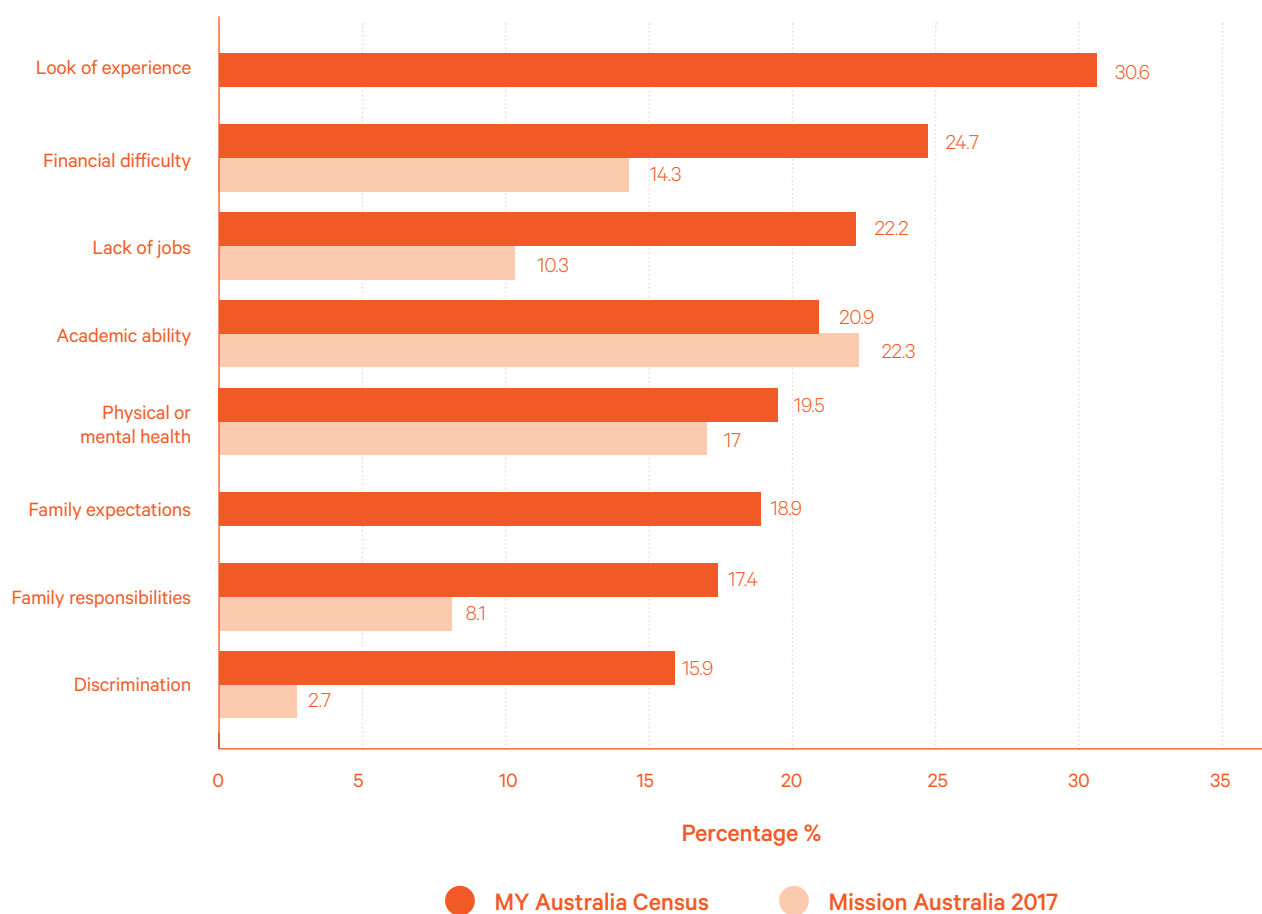
**Family expectations and family responsibilities were perceived as a barrier** to achieving study and work goals for almost one quarter of multicultural young people. This

finding was reiterated in the qualitative research, where participants detailed how family expectations could be a source of stress and pressure.

“I’m like the one who takes the responsibilities in my family. I am like [the one] who does everything in my family, regarding paper work because my parents don’t know English. ... It [taking responsibility] doesn’t stress me, but sometimes I feel it is a bit difficult. I am under a lot of pressure.”

The **high proportion who cite discrimination as a barrier** also emphasises the finding in later sections of this report which ask specifically why young people were having difficulty finding work.

Table 3.6 Barriers to achieving study/work goals







# 04 ECONOMIC INDICATORS





## ECONOMIC INDICATORS

## DOMAINS

Education  
Employment  
Finances

Economic indicators relate to multicultural young people's participation in education, training and employment. While participation in the workforce can alleviate financial stress and address economic inequality, many forms of employment for young people are difficult to access, precarious or unstable.

Economic indicators evaluate the barriers to continuing, meaningful work for multicultural young people. These measures assess the viability of existing pathways from education to work, and the capacity for multicultural young people to fulfil long term work and study goals. Participation in work and study can also shape cultural and social outcomes, by contributing to belonging and reinforcing social networks.

## EDUCATION

Four in five young people surveyed were studying (82.7%). Of those who were studying most (88.1%) were studying full-time, while 11.9% were studying part-time.

Qualitative research identified a number of barriers and supports for multicultural youth in educational settings.

Some newly arrived multicultural youth identified a lack of adequate resources as a significant barrier.

“We need computers and laptops for our studies. I was in a college for 8 months, and other students had everything they needed, computers, laptops, access to the internet, etc. We don't even have access to the internet here. Sometime we don't even have teachers here at this centre.”

“With the stipend that we receive from Centrelink, we cannot afford anything beyond food. We cannot do anything else with it. We cannot spend it on learning or facilities.”

For some, families set high expectations for educational achievement.

“My parents have the expectation that all of us [siblings] going to university. Each one of my siblings, once they get to Year 12, they move on to university so that's a major expectation, studying something at uni. ... That goes to every Sudanese person in the community. ... So, it's basically our parents giving us opportunities that they were never granted so just things they never experienced, they want their kids to experience.”

For others, family responsibilities posed a barrier to achieving educational goals.

“Even though I have elder brother and elder siblings, but they are married. They have their family. I feel like I am responsible for like the whole family, like in terms of paying the bills. Mum and dad, they can't speak English so I have to do all the house, like paying the bills, in terms of appointments and all those stuff, sometimes I have to take them to appointment and all those kinds of stuff. ... If your parents can't speak English and you're responsible for the family, you feel more pressure. ... Sometimes my mum has appointment at hospital. Sometime they have interpreter, but sometimes they can't find an interpreter, so sometimes I have to miss

a class from uni. So, I just send an email to my lecturer or convener saying 'My mum has an appointment and I have to take her there and I can't come to the class'. I miss the class there.”

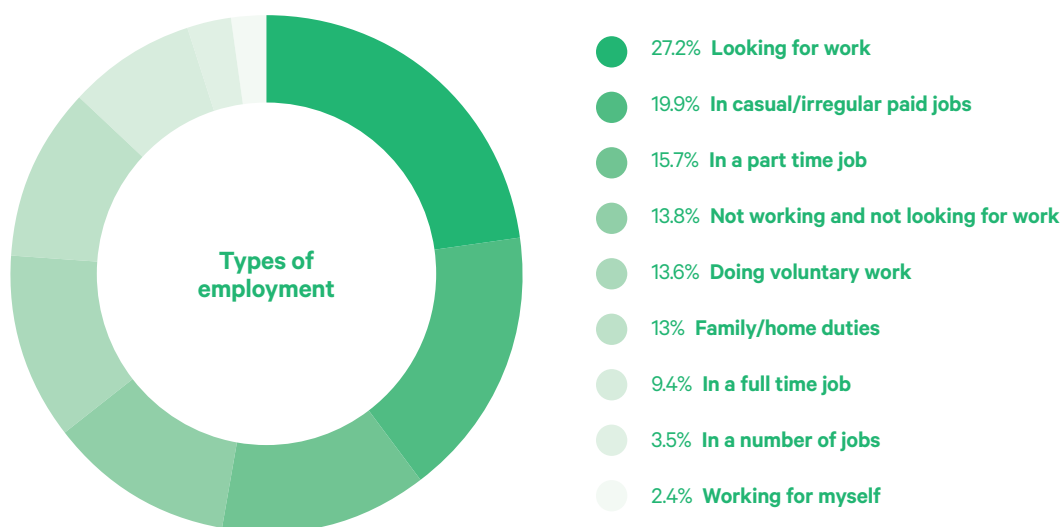
“The TAFE hours allocated to parents is not enough. The 510 hours of English studies is not really sufficient for parents. We are young and still after one year and a half haven't learned the language well. How do you expect them, given their age, to learn English in 510 hours? ... My mum has finished her hours, and now she is home. I am so concerned for her that I cannot focus on anything now.”

“I have a dream to become a nurse. I have some problem with family and I think like I can't do the nursing because my family is really like poor and I have to do caring for them. If I do the full time caring, I can't go to college.”

## EMPLOYMENT

The sample reflected a range of employment situations and work patterns. Over one quarter of the sample stated they were looking for work (27.2%). In a separate question, about half stated that they would like to work more hours than they currently do (49.6%).

Table 4.1 Types of employment



This high proportion who would like to work more than they currently do suggest that multicultural young people reflect higher levels of 'underutilisation' than the general youth population (BSL 2017). According to ABS Labour Force data, 31% of 15 to 24 year olds in Australia are underemployed (ABS 2017). By contrast, the rate of underemployment for the MY Australia Census sample is almost 50%.

These high levels of underemployment suggest the job market is a key area of indirect discrimination; multicultural youth are less able than their peers to find adequate work.

### Satisfaction with employment

Those who were employed in some kind of paid work were asked about various aspects of their job that may lead to satisfaction with their employment situation.

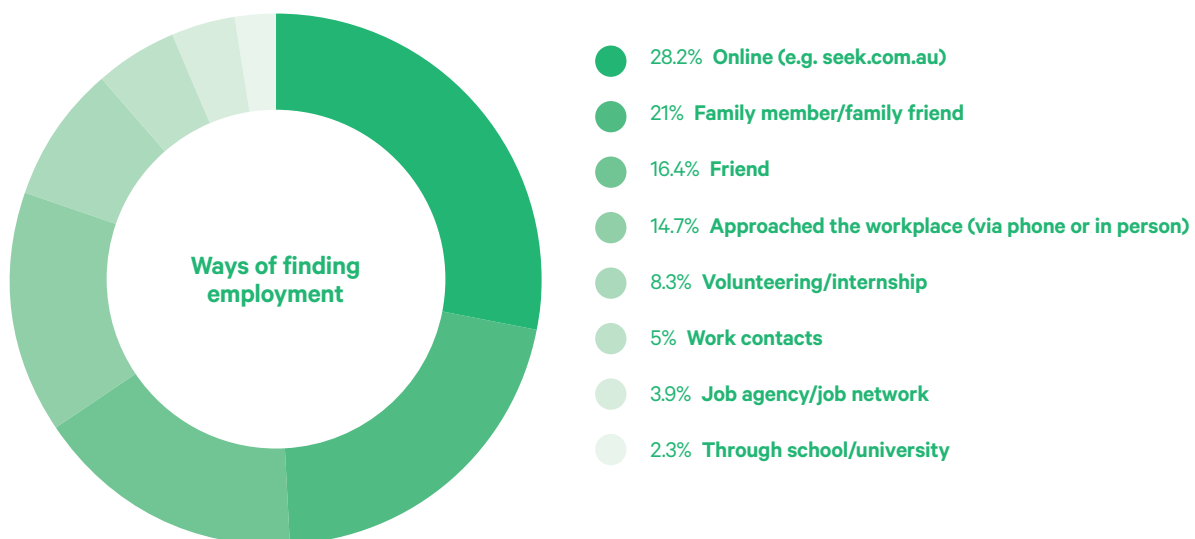
A high proportion of multicultural young people stated that they feel physically safe at work (90% 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed') and that they were treated with respect at work (87.7% 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed'). However, while these numbers seem encouraging it means that around one in ten of those in paid work felt unsafe or that they were not treated with respect. These negative feelings may be attributed to experiences of discrimination or having witnessed discrimination towards others in the workplace, as described earlier in the report.

Around three quarters of the sample believed that their pay is good (74.8% 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed'), and a similar proportion felt their job lets them use their skills and abilities (77.1% 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' with this statement). Despite these positive aspects of their paid work there was a strong sense that these jobs did not directly relate to their training and qualifications – close to half of those who answered this question felt this way (48% 'disagreed' or 'strongly disagreed' with the statement that the job was directly related to their qualifications). Perhaps this is not surprising given the relative youthfulness of the sample, and the increasing time required for young people to find work specific to their qualifications and training.

### Transitions to employment

The most common way in which multicultural young people found their current main job was by searching online (28.2%). This was higher than the proportion who accessed employment through family networks (21%) or friends (16.4%). This appears to highlight the resourcefulness of multicultural young people who perhaps cannot rely on existing social networks to find employment to the same extent as the wider youth population.

Table 4.2 Ways of finding employment



## Barriers to employment

Over half of the sample stated that it was either 'difficult' or 'very difficult' to find work (56.1%). Around one quarter felt that finding work had been 'easy' or 'very easy' (26.8%). A remaining 17.1% had not looked for work.

Multicultural young people offered a range of reasons why they believed it was difficult for them to find work, relating to racial discrimination; lack of experience; lack of social networks; lack of knowledge; and qualifications and study requirements.

While these are barriers that all young people potentially face, it is not a level playing field. For multicultural young people it appears that cultural differences, and the challenges of having to navigate an unfamiliar process in a new country, exacerbate barriers to the job market. In the quotes below we see that cultural factors shape young people's responses across each category, and go beyond explicit forms of racial discrimination.

Reasons for difficulty finding work	Sample quotes
Racial discrimination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• My ethnicity. My surname on the resume. Almost every interviewer would question 'Where did I come from?'</li> <li>• Unconscious bias (e.g. my name so until I changed my name to a nickname, I received more phone calls).</li> <li>• Because I'm on a bridging visa (Asylum seeker) I think employers think I'm not stable for work.</li> <li>• I feel like it is a lack of my possible experience, but I'm also quite aware it could be because of my name looking 'ethnic' and my appearance isn't exactly 'White'.</li> <li>• People judge me because of how dark I am not realising that I can do much more than that, my skin doesn't affect anything neither I cannot change it.</li> <li>• At one job interview I was asked upfront what my cultural background was and I felt like I was being categorised on my ability to undertake the role based on that.</li> <li>• I think employers assume that I either don't have good English or cultural knowledge or the likes when they see my Asian last name. Or they assume that I'm on a student visa.</li> <li>• A lot of people turned me down due to my physical appearance (Hijab, dark skin).</li> <li>• One time I had a phone interview. ... And then I went to the next stage where like in person interviews. And the person who was interviewing me was like 'Oh you don't look like what you sound like!'</li> <li>• My full passport name is sort of more Chinese ethnic name. It's always on my mind if I use my full Chinese ethnic name, it can make me sort of seen as foreign or be a disadvantage which is why I always make sure I use a third name, I use [Western name], that's what my common name is.</li> </ul>
Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To have the experience which I do not have, and to know where the jobs are which I do not know.</li> <li>• Employers want someone with experience but I was raised in a culture where part time work or casual work is secondary to academic pursuits.</li> <li>• Being new in the country hence don't have enough work experience like employers always ask.</li> <li>• I also started to look for work at the age of 19, although I feel like in Australia it's normal to have work experience earlier than that – so I had no references or work history at 19, which was likely a red flag in addition to my poor confidence.</li> <li>• Asking for experience which I don't have because no one has given me a chance.</li> <li>• Having no work experience being a new migrant and not having any community connections.</li> </ul>

Reasons for difficulty finding work	Sample quotes
Social/professional networks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I do not know anyone.</li> <li>A serious lack of professional networks has also made it difficult to seek relevant employment opportunities. I find myself at a disadvantage from my peers who have connections within their chosen industries.</li> <li>Not having connections; because my parents aren't very established here and don't have people that they know, and because they both work at relatively 'low' jobs such as factory worker and part time hospitality worker, it is hard to know how to get work or where to get work. For example some people I know work as a receptionist for a family friend's business, or get introduced to a job through family.</li> <li>Lack of connections mostly, that's how most people find jobs these days and a lack of network in Australia meant to start from zero, have zero support from anyone and making it hard to acquire the skills/experience needed to advance as well as no knowledge about how the system works (e.g writing resumes, cover letters, how to apply etc).</li> </ul>
Lack of knowledge about how to apply	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Being unfamiliar with the process of applying for jobs.</li> <li>Not knowing where to start and what to do.</li> <li>It's a new country and the way you look for a job is totally different from where I've come from.</li> <li>Not knowing where to apply, and not knowing people who are already working in that industry.</li> <li>Knowing where to look for work, different standards compared to home country. High demand for jobs in Melbourne..</li> </ul>
Qualifications and study requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>When I was looking for a job, it was difficult as the areas of employment I was looking into required some level of study. I did not have access to tertiary study at the time and was forced to apply for jobs that I did not necessarily aspire to but that I knew could ensure quick employment.</li> <li>It was hard to obtain qualifications to get jobs. Every workplace wants a qualification of some sort. To study is almost impossible if you do not have money. I'm one of the lucky ones. I am currently working full time in a demanding, essential, minimum wage job while studying 5 units at university so I can work in essential services in Australia.</li> <li>Its really hard to find the job that related to my future job because they need qualification/certificate to do it.</li> <li>Lack of qualifications because I can't afford university fees here in Australia. I'm not eligible for any of the school loans.</li> </ul>

## PERSONAL FINANCES

### Financial stress

Multicultural young people reported experiencing a variety of forms of financial stress over the past year.

Around one fifth had trouble meeting transport costs (20.7%), study costs (20.6%) or phone/internet bills (19.2%).

More than one in ten stated they had difficulty keeping up with house bills (16.7%), food costs (15.8%) and rent or mortgage payments (15.6%).

These difficulties with meeting financial costs were greater for those who lived independently compared with those who were supported by their families.





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