

# SOCIAL NETWORKS, BELONGING & ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP AMONG MIGRANT YOUTH IN AUSTRALIA

AN AUSTRALIAN RESEARCH COUNCIL  
LINKAGE PROJECT



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An Australian Research Council Linkage Project

## Research Undertaken by:

The Centre for Citizenship and Globalisation (CCG), Deakin University and Monash University  
In partnership with: Centre for Multicultural Youth (CMY) and Australian Red Cross

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## Acknowledgements

This project involved industry partners that are at the cusp of challenges associated with migrant integration and adaptation. CMY is a Victorian not-for-profit organisation supporting young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds to build better lives in Australia. Through a combination of specialist support services, training and consultancy, knowledge sharing and advocacy, CMY works to remove the barriers young people face as they make Australia home.

Australian Red Cross provides a range of services for recently arrived migrants and asylum seekers and seeks to articulate its unique approach to youth issues in a partnership framework that links it to other agencies working with migrant youth, such as CMY.

The Project's chief investigators would like to acknowledge the significant contribution of both industry partners and thank them for their positive proactive partnership toward the successful completion of the project. We would also like to thank the larger research team (including Masa Mikola, Ameera Karimshah, Liudmila Kirpitchenko, Libby Effeney and Melinda Chiment) and in particular acknowledge and thank all the participants who volunteered their time and actively embraced the project.

## Chief Investigators

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ISBN: 978-0-646-90775-8  
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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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This report presents research findings from an ARC Linkage Project 'Social Networks, Belonging and Active Citizenship Among Migrant Youth in Melbourne and Brisbane', conducted between 2009 -2013 (LP0989182). This research used quantitative methods in the form of questionnaires, and qualitative/mixed methods in the form of semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions with young people (15-23 years old) from African, Arabic-speaking and Pacific Island backgrounds. A total of 587 young people participated in this Project, of them 484 people took part in the survey component and an additional 103 people participated in the focus groups and interviews in Brisbane and Melbourne, Australia. Ethnic and cultural diversity of participants and the purposive nature of the sampling procedures dictate some caution in the interpretation of results even though the overall findings allow us to clearly discern some varying dynamics within and across groups. The qualitative and quantitative data sets were analysed using qualitative research software NVIVO and SPSS respectively.

## Key Findings

**Cross cultural networks:** Participants in this research from Pacific Island, African and Arabic-speaking groups expressed a clear desire for cross-cultural engagement. The reasons for desire to engage varied considerably between the three groups. The African participants commonly understood cross-cultural engagement as a form of cultural experience and a desire to belong: the more multicultural their networks became the more they felt a sense of belonging. For the Pacific Island participants, the desire for cross-cultural engagement was a response to the perceived closed and homogenous nature of their networks. Yet, despite their desire to engage cross-culturally, Pacific Island participants often argued they had neither the time nor the ability to engage with people outside of their group given that they were so heavily involved in their community and their church. For the Arabic-speaking participants, cross-cultural engagement was seen to a considerable extent as a way of countering stereotypes and changing negative attitudes about their religion and culture.

**Belonging and Engagement:** African, Pacific Island and Arabic-speaking participants identified numerous reasons for engagement in formal and informal networks. The most striking was the complexity of negotiating a sense of belonging with family or community network responsibilities. Participants across all three groups expressed comfort and

support derived from being engaged within their ethnic groups. Although they also admitted, to varying degrees, that intra-group obligations placed certain hindrance on their ability to engage outwardly.

**Social barriers to network engagement:** Participants in all three groups identified a variety of experiences that led them to disengage from certain networks. For African and Arabic-speaking young people, direct experience of racism was the greatest single factor for social withdrawal. For Pacific Island young people, self-exclusion was often related to various forms of collective stereotyping and discrimination.

**Volunteering:** The participants revealed that involvement in external volunteering activities was secondary to their involvement in religious, school-based or recreation groups. There were some important differences, however, between different age groups and between the Melbourne and Brisbane samples.

**Leadership:** Leadership in this report is defined as a set of 'relational practices' that are similar to 'mentoring'. According to the Project participants, the most sought after characteristics of a young leader are a capacity for being a 'role model' and for extending 'respect for others'. Pacific Island young people most often discussed leadership by referring to the importance of being a 'role model', whereas African and Arabic-speaking youth 'respect for others' was the key prism through which the questions of leadership were addressed. 'Having a firm opinion' is the least valued characteristics of a young leader across the three groups.

**Access to Services and Service Providers:** Only a small number of respondents felt that their networks provided a specific service or referral assistance with the lowest level recorded among African young people. Time constraints, location and the lack of cultural sensitivity were reported as key barriers to accessing mainstream service providers across all groups. Not getting timely and accessible (in terms of language and culture) information about services was also mentioned as a barrier in particular among Arabic-speaking and Pacific Island youth.

Inter-generational conflicts also influence the ways young people are involved in networks and how they communicate and interact with service providers. African youth in both cities, and Arabic-speaking youth in Brisbane, expressed most concerns about inter-generational differences.



# RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are based on the empirical findings of this Project. These recommendations are aimed at improving the quality of services provided to Australian migrant youth to strengthen their sense of community belonging, social inclusion and general well-being.

## Recommendations Relating to Youth Participation and Engagement:

### **Giving Voice to Young People of Diverse Backgrounds.**

Having opportunities to voice their experiences and be heard was found to be of foremost importance for young people of diverse backgrounds. Young people experienced a need to communicate the everyday realities of living as young and multicultural people to a wider Australian public. Young people felt marginalised when they were perceived through the label of 'migrant', 'refugee' or 'CALD' youth. These labels often impeded them from publicly voicing their experiences for the mainstream audiences. It was found that increasing the number, variety and quality of opportunities for young people to express their views and be heard by the mainstream population is essential. Such opportunities can include multicultural programs and events, youth forums and festivals showcasing successes and young people's achievements and involving mainstream media exposure.

**1. Improving Media Representation of Young People of Diverse Backgrounds.** Relating to the previous recommendation, our data support strengthening representation and participation of young migrant people in the mainstream media – which remains an area of trenchant discontent and critique for your study participants, as well as a common theme found in other studies with related groups of young CALD people. Government and the service sector should place a particular focus on creating and promoting media opportunities for young people. Training programs for migrant youth and youth leaders should include skills in media engagement so that migrant youth are agents of media and not merely the recipients of media attention.

**2. Engaging Youth through Diverse Activities.** Our data show that mainstream recreational facilities, such as sporting places or parks were not very popular across all participant groups. Among the three groups, sports facilities were slightly most popular among African respondents, but it was particularly unpopular as a place to go for Arabic-speakers. This particularly aversion to going to sporting places and parks can be

explained by the cultural preferences. This finding is counter to so many programs that seek to engage young people through sport as part of a social inclusion and community belonging agenda. The forms of social and recreational engagement for migrant youth need to go beyond sporting, parks and other mainstream activities. Culturally specific forms of engagement need to be promoted and resourced as part of an active citizenship model for migrant youth.

**3. Promoting Volunteering Experiences.** Volunteering experiences of young people in their diverse cultural forms need to be promoted and acknowledged. The research revealed that young people tended to be involved in a range of formal and informal volunteering activities within and outside their communities for a variety of culturally specific reasons. Government and the service sector should provide more encouragement, different forms of motivation and support for this form of bridging social capital.

**4. Cultivating Youth Leadership Qualities.** It was found that ongoing support is needed for cultivating leadership qualities among multicultural youth. The research revealed that young people were eager to take on leadership roles and to participate in leadership development events. This was of particular significance to the African and Arabic-speaking groups and, to a lesser extent, for Pacific Islander youth. Government and service providers are encouraged to organise more culturally sensitive programs, events and other opportunities to enable young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds to participate in youth leadership training programs, leadership forums and related leadership skills building activities.

## Recommendations Relating to Building Networks, Trust and Social Cohesion:

**5. Strengthening Belonging and Engagement.** The research revealed that young people experienced the highest level of belonging and engagement when involved in social networks associated with their own communities. At the same time, they expressed a desire to reach out and engage across all communities but sometimes experienced barriers to this form of engagement. Belonging, trust and community engagement are the cornerstones of social cohesion and government and service providers are called upon to deliver more programs and initiatives to encourage and support trust building and engagement. Equally, more research

is needed to identify the most effective approaches for building and strengthening belonging and engagement.

**6. Building Trust and Social Cohesion.** There is a strong need for building trust and social cohesion among social networks. Overall, in interpersonal relations young people from all three groups tend to be trusting of other people. Amongst the three groups, trust levels of young Arabic-speakers are the lowest, with survey data showing that more than a third of this group thinks that they can't trust anyone. People from all three groups trust their family the most, but not necessarily their other relatives. A comprehensive family approach adopted by service providers could deliver some positive outcomes in this regard.

**7. Supporting Social Inclusion and Active Citizenship.** Interviewees from all three groups reported a range of 'exclusionary practices' that prevented them from participating in social networks. These 'exclusionary practices' ranged from explicit, targeted racism to more implicit or covert discrimination or social exclusion. As illustrated in the literature social networks act as vehicles for active involvement and engagement in practices of citizenship. There is, therefore a need to develop innovative strategies and programs to prevent discriminatory practices and alienation of some groups. These strategies and programs should be aimed at proactively promoting social inclusion and nurturing participative citizenship across diverse groups.

## Recommendations Relating to Service Provision:

**1. Cross-Cultural Engagement.** The research finding demonstrated that young migrants were deeply appreciative of the social activities organized by the local government agencies that bring multicultural youth together and foster intercultural learning and exchange. Programs aimed at sustaining cross-cultural engagement and social cohesion need more public support, funding and policy focus. The research revealed that young people from Pacific island, African and Arabic backgrounds had a clear and expressed desire to engage with young people from other cultural backgrounds. Young people are in a position to both transform the capacity of future generations around cross-cultural engagement, and at times to positively influence attitudes and beliefs amongst older generations of migrant Australians. Developing new programs, providing funding and maintaining policy focus on this area of cross-cultural engagement would contribute to strengthening social cohesion in the Australian community now and in the future.

**2. Inclusive School Environment.** Creating a culturally sensitive school environment needs to be maintained as a policy priority for the state government. This study suggest that while in

general young people tended to have good relations with teachers and other school staff, they still felt a constant need to 'prove themselves' in an external to schools environment. They felt that in this broader environment beyond school, 'Australian' values and ways of learning were likely to be prioritised and their individual needs were – often unintentionally - suppressed. It is recommended that State and Federal governments encourage, support and fund culturally sensitive programs, initiatives and events to create a more inclusive and supportive school environment for young people of diverse backgrounds.

**3. Family-Focused Approach.** Some project participants reported having problems gaining support or understanding from their parents for their personal and community network involvements. It was of particular concern to African youth and was related to activities which did not directly relate to measurable educational outcomes. Relationships that young people have with their parents and siblings are an important influence on the level and frequency of their participation and involvement in social groups, and they also impact their strategies of involvement in social networks. Service providers are encouraged to ensure that a culturally specific and family-focused service delivery approach is taken when engaging with young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds.

**4. Locality and Service Provision.** Distance from services constitutes the bulk of reported reasons for young people's lack of involvement in different social and community programs. This is often amplified by the lack of information about services. Qualitative data gathered as part of this project show that location of services is the most commonly mentioned barrier to participation in the programmes of service providers. Quantitative research findings, on the other hand, reveal that the most important barrier to participation is time constraint. Young people tend to be more involved in groups and programs nearby close to their places of residence. Government and service providers need to incorporate an awareness of this issue of locality into the provision of programs for young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds.



# SECTION 1.

# INTRODUCTION

# INTRODUCTION

The report presents findings of the ARC Linkage Project 'Social networks, active citizenship and belonging among migrant youth in Australia' (LP098912) conducted by Deakin University's Centre for Citizenship and Globalisation, The University of Queensland and Monash University, in partnership with the Centre for Multicultural Youth and Australian Red Cross. The Project sought to investigate the extent to which young people use formal networks (such as government agencies and public institutions as well as community-specific and NGO support services) and informal networks (including family and sub-cultural networks) to develop a sense of social connectedness and belonging in a multicultural social environment. Specifically, the Project explored the following questions:

- To what extent does embeddedness in social networks impact on a sense of cultural identity and belonging among young people?
- To what extent do inter-cultural tensions and experiences of racism affect young people's feelings of belonging?
- Are there any considerable differences in social networks and resultant feelings of belonging between African, Arabic-speaking and Pacific Island youth?
- What is the level and form of agency, if any, among young people in translating social networks into outcomes associated with notions of belonging and citizenship?
- Do targeted youth programs enhance social connectedness, active social participation and a sense of belonging among migrant youth?

In exploring these questions, the project examined the ability of young people to create and engage with social networks through an analysis of practices that might enhance their social participation. The project investigated the challenges faced by migrant youth in pursuing their quest for belonging and it also looked at the individual strategies deployed by young people to achieve active and engaged citizenship. Participants involved in this Project were loosely clustered into three groups based in Melbourne and Brisbane: 'African', 'Arabic-speaking' and 'Pacific Island' youth.

## Background to the Research Project

Australia has a long and complex history of migration and settlement and a highly diverse population. The 2011 Australian Census revealed that over a quarter (26%) of Australia's population were born overseas and a further one fifth (20%) had at least one overseas-born parent (ABS 2012). There were also over 300 ancestral groups separately identified in the 2011 census. Furthermore, mixed ancestry has also started to become a strong feature of diversity in Australia with just under a third (32%) of people who responded to the ancestry question reporting two or more ancestries (ABS 2012). Cultural diversity is thus a key feature of current government initiatives to address issues ranging from how to provide fair and equitable services to the various groups in society to the best ways to ensure inclusion of diverse people and social cohesion within communities.

Australian contemporary immigration policy has been developed since World War Two when population growth became the prime focus of Australian government. People from non-British source countries were allowed to come to Australia under certain conditions and expectations of assimilation. Between 1945 and 1972 and early migrants were selected on their perceived ability to assimilate quickly into the Australian society (Cox 1987). Assimilation was characterized by an expectation that all immigrants switch from their mother tongues to English and abandon the linguistic and cultural practices of the home country (Burnett 1998, Berndt 1964). The need for settlement services was not officially recognised and therefore minimal (Millbank et al. 2006). Australia has continued to admit people of non-British and non-white background. Thus the early 1950s saw a launching of a Colombo Plan which was a cooperative venture for the economic and social advancement of the peoples of South and Southeast Asia. Under this Plan Asian students arrived to Australia for long-term training and skills development. Following the Vietnam War a large number of Indo-Chinese refugees came to Australia under the humanitarian program and it was only then that settlement services began to take root.

Under these influences, push for assimilation has become to be seen as discriminatory as it reinforced social exclusion

in the host community (Berndt 1964). The expectation for new migrants to assimilate was progressively lifted in the late 1960s and early 1970s and the discourse shifted to one of integration and then multiculturalism (DIAC 2012b; Millbank et al 2006). Jerzy Zubrzycki, who became an Adviser to the Minister for Immigration and Ethnic Affairs in 1968, is credited to be a 'founder' of Australian multiculturalism. He articulated a voluntary integrative model of multiculturalism which reinforced the importance of cultural pluralism and strong commitment to group rights and access and equity concerns (Naraniecki 2011).

To address multiple levels of inequalities encountered by ethno-cultural groups, Australian government introduced the policy of multiculturalism following the Canadian model in the early 1970s. When the Labour Party won elections in 1972. The new Minister for Immigration, Al Grassby, officially declared the end of the official White Australia Policy which had been a part of Australia's national identity since the birth of the Federation and the passing of the Immigration Restriction Act in 1901. Al Grassby proclaimed in 1973: 'White Australia is dead. Give me a shovel and I will bury it' (quoted in Tavan 2005: 204).

The new policy of multiculturalism was seen as promoting pluralism and diversity by giving of respect to different values and cultures for the sake of enriching Australia. It was followed by the 1975 amendments to the Racial Discrimination Act; establishment of the Australian Ethnic Affairs Council in 1976; and adoption of the National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia in 1989, which defined for the first time policy responses to diversity in the population (DIAC 2012b, Burnett 1998). Multiculturalism in Australia and its attendant public policies have passed through several stages: from the 'egalitarian multiculturalism' of the Whitlam era (1973-1975), through the 'liberal multiculturalism' of Fraser (1975-1983) to the 'managerial multiculturalism' of Hawke, Keating and Howard (1983-2007) (Jayasuriya 2008: 27-28).

Recent conflicts in Asia, Africa and the Middle East have seen waves of forced migrants and refugees settle in Australia. However, despite various targeted and well-intended multiculturalist approaches, each wave of migrants has faced settlement issues. The policy of multiculturalism

accepts that cultural differences are inevitable and that both migrant and the host community need to mutually adapt to one another. However, it does not fully take into account the social, economic and structural inequalities that many migrants experience in Australia (Burnett 1998).

The conservative Howard Government period (1996-2007) ushered in the aggressive assertion of national citizenship values at the expense of cultural pluralism and recognition of cultural differences. Under the Howard Government, financial support for multiculturalism was gradually undermined by 'economic rationalism' and it was a period of a slow erosion of multiculturalism as a public policy (Poynting 2008). The word 'multiculturalism' was symbolically removed from the title of the Commonwealth Department when the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs was renamed into the Department of Immigration and Citizenship in January 2007. As Jayasuriya (2008: 27) explains, 'The fallout from identity politics has been a form of cultural ghettoization ... and a 'them vs. us' attitude, vividly portrayed during the Cronulla riots with the cryptic slogan 'we grew here, you flew here''. A similar trend of a retreat from multiculturalism policies has also been described in three other countries that had been prominently committed to them: Canada, the Netherlands, and Britain (Joppke 2004).

Over decades and through different policy approaches towards migration, some settlement issues stubbornly persist and remain prominent for migrants who settle in Australia. These issues include: difficulties with English language acquisition, negotiating belonging across different contexts, adapting to cultural norms, inter-generational tensions, social isolation and related exclusionary problems (Burnett 1998; Levitas et al. 2007). Although these issues impacted on both early migrants and recent arrivals, the current social and political context makes a focus on migrant youth, as the primary demographic segment, both important and timely.

Australia continues to experience populist and exclusionary discourses around notions of national identity and this were pushed in particular direction over the past decades with the emergence of a new global context shaped by the so-called 'war on terror'. This new set of conditions has made it difficult

for some cultural groups to establish a strong sense of belonging and active participation in social life. Migrant youth represents a particularly sensitive category in these critical processes because for migrant youth, engagement with different government and non-government agencies as well as family and school networks can impact heavily on the processes of identity formation that are inherently dynamic and 'necessarily multiple and fluid' (Noble and Tabar 2002: 128). Negotiating identities in the context of these conditions remains a highly contested endeavour. Continuing high levels of immigration intake in Australia (DIAC 2011a: 5-6; DIAC 2011b: 1) have resulted in more demands placed on government and non-government agencies to provide the support and services required to facilitate settlement.

The current social climate of perceived intercultural tensions in many émigré societies, including Australia, highlights the need to develop a more nuanced understanding of the complex cultural adjustment processes. Both formal and informal networks formed by migrant youth in different contexts have the capacity to impact on the ways migrant youth develop and articulate a sense of individual and group belonging. Formal and informal social networks are often inter-linked and can operate in either complementary fashion or, in the case of informal networks, as a substitution for formal networks and social services (Pichler and Wallace 2007: 427). In this way, social networks influence the lived experiences of belonging among young people. Our rationale for focusing at the migrant youth in particular, over migrants in general, was grounded on the hypothesized divergent youth experiences in participating in the social networks, as well as youth experiences in creating new forms of networking. We were also interested in the issues of intergenerational relations, and youth cultural competencies.

The 'Social Networks among Migrant Youth' Project explored these inter-connected issues within the broader question of social integration among young people of migrant background. Integration is understood as a process through which individuals and groups are able to maintain their cultural identity while actively participating in the larger societal framework (Korac 2001). This project focused specifically on multiple networks which contextualise the identities of migrant youth. While cultural factors are considered critical indicators of successful integration into the host community (Abu Laban et al. 2000; ECRE 2001), not

enough research has been conducted into the ways in which social networks can impinge upon the formation of cultural identity and belonging amongst migrant youth. This project, therefore, aims to fill an important gap in existing literature on migrant integration and social cohesion (Daley 2007), particularly in the context of discussions about young people's subjective re-negotiation of individual and group identities (Berry 1997).

One of the key objectives of this project is to explore the notion of active citizenship which is a comparatively recent concept. In contrast to traditional understanding of citizenship as appropriation of rights and responsibilities, newer forms of citizenship emphasise active involvement and engagement in the practices of citizenship. The idea that the active side of citizenship needs to be emphasised has received strong support from the leading contemporary scholars. Thus, Isin (2008: 7) believes that "critical studies of citizenship over the last two decades have taught us that what is important is not only that citizenship is a legal status but that it also involves practices of making citizens – social, political, cultural and symbolic'. According to Zaff and colleagues (2010), an active citizen is a person who possesses a set of civic skills and behaviours, such as: sense of civic self-efficacy, social connections with community, and responsibility to community.

There are many individual and social benefits associated with active civic engagement, including positive contributions to individual development, family and community well-being. Zaff and colleagues (2010: 736) maintain that "When young people are active citizens and actively engaged in improving the well-being of their communities and their country, their own development is enhanced and civil society benefits". Mutually beneficial contributions to self and to society are the cornerstones of Lerner's (2004) theory of positive youth development which is possible in a society that values and supports civic initiatives and individual contributions. Zaff et al. 2010: 764) believe that "understanding and enhancing youth engagement in civil societies is a critical facet in programs and policies aimed at maintaining and enhancing democracy". We uphold the idea of active citizenship and use empirical data to demonstrate how active citizenship may be manifested in practice among migrant youth, particularly through involvement in social networks and creative engagement in social justice issues.



This project is a result of collaboration with the industry partners that are at the cusp of challenges associated with migrant integration and adaptation: the Centre for Multicultural Youth (CMY) and the Australian Red Cross (ARC). CMY is a community-based organisation which provides support for young people of migrant and refugee background. It offers an extensive list of programs for young people, including newly arrived support services, referral and mentoring programs, training and education. CMY is also central to the recent (2005) initiative to establish The National Multicultural Youth Issues Network (NMYIN). In addition, CMY's key objective is to inform the sector and undertake research affecting CALD young people.

The Australian Red Cross is a member of the International Red Cross Red Crescent Movement (the International Movement) with millions of members and volunteers in over 188 countries. The three components of the International Movement are the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), 188 Red Cross Red Crescent National Societies, and the International Federation of Red Cross Red Crescent Societies (IFRC). The mission of the Movement is to prevent or reduce human suffering, wherever it is found, with the guidance of the seven Fundamental Principles. The Australian Red Cross vision is to improve the lives of vulnerable people in Australia and internationally by mobilizing the power of humanity.

## Project Aims and Objectives

A main objective of this Project is to examine the relationship between the negotiation of migrant youth identities and their involvement in social networks. It takes into account the fundamental premise of the social capital literature (Bourdieu 1986; Coleman 1988; Putnam 1993) that strong engagement in societal networks generally correlates positively with a range of social and attitudinal outcomes (Woolcock 1998; Portes 2000; Putnam 2007). However, not all networks have a positive effect and some may have a distinctly negative impact. For example, while culture-specific networks may provide an important and positive resource, particularly in the settlement stage (Hagan 1998; Colic-Peisker 2005) they can also be negative if they become too closed and lead to ghettoization (Hardwick 2003) or promoting radical agendas (Tilly 2007). Young migrant groups in particular have been linked to marginalised activities, as Anita Harris (2013:3) points out: "Youth-

driven civil unrest, terrorist attacks and the visibility of large and youthful immigrant population in global cities have become constructed as interrelated problems that call into question the sustainability of diversity and the future of the nation as we know it". Despite the abundance of literature on social capital and social networks, there is a dearth of knowledge on sociologically informed understanding of the significance of social networks for a formation of identities among migrant youth. Harris (2013:5) further writes that young migrant people "are rarely seen as civic actors, creative agents or multicultural citizens in their own right, and the complex realities of their everyday experiences of living in multicultural environments have been over-looked". To address this gap in the literature, the Project was aimed at:

- exploring the extent to which embeddedness in formal and informal social networks corresponds with the intensity of a sense of cultural identity, community engagement, social belonging and active citizenship among the three groups of youth; and
- examining the extent to which experience of 'inter-cultural tensions' and racism are affecting young people's experience of belonging;

It is anticipated that our findings will contribute to a better understanding of the socio-cultural challenges faced by migrant youth and provide better appreciation of the significance of social networks as critical generators of social capital and young people's sense of belonging.

## Project Design and Methodology

Research for this project was conducted among 'migrant youth' in Melbourne and Brisbane. We define 'migrant youth' as an age-specific category (15-23 years of age) comprising both local and overseas-born youth from both English- and Non-English-speaking Background (NESB). Such definition of migrant youth cuts across generational definitions of migrants (Skrbis et al. 2007) and meets practitioners' requirements for a comprehensive and inclusive treatment of the category of youth. Late adolescence and early adulthood are significant periods psychologically because it is during this stage that individuals commence the process of shaping their identities into coherent wholes (Damon and Hart 1988) and developing a sense of the self.

A total of 587 young people participated in this project with 484 people taking part in the survey component and an additional 103 in the focus groups and interviews across both states. Migrant youth were selected among three broadly clustered ethno-cultural groups: Arabic-speaking, Pacific Island and African groups. These groups were chosen for participation in this Project as being among arguably the most vulnerable and marginalised groups in Australia. Their vulnerability has been seen in recent high profile cases linking them to the manifestations of prejudice, stigmatisation, racism, public disorder and inter-communal conflict. Research shows that Arabic-speaking youth, for example, have experienced a heightened sense of marginalisation since 9/11 (Mansouri 2005; Mansouri & Kemp 2007; Mansouri & Marotta 2012). African youth have been described recently as 'problematic', exhibiting very high levels of youth unemployment, unable to integrate and potentially a major threat to social cohesion in Australia (Hobday 2007). Young people from a Pacific Island background account disproportionately for higher rates of crime and incarceration (White, Perrone, Guerra & Lampugnani 1999). Young people included in the project had varying lengths of Australian residency and migration pathways, who spoke a variety of languages and who had varying levels of inter- and intra- group social participation. This diverse mixture of young participants reflects the diversity of clientele of the industry partners involved in the project.

Research participants were recruited through a variety of strategies. In Melbourne, participants were recruited mainly through high school education sectors (Department of Education, Catholic and Independent Sectors) as well as through service providers in the region (including Centre for Multicultural Youth). In Brisbane, participants were accessed through a variety of service providers in the region, including but not limited to, Multicultural Development Association, Ethnic Communities Council Queensland and Queensland Program of Assistance for Survivors of Torture and Trauma.

The Project employed a triangulated design using secondary data analysis together with the generation of qualitative and quantitative data sets. A literature review of key themes and debates served as a basis for the conceptual and theoretical

context for the Project and provided a background for the survey and interview design. The 'Social Networks, Belonging and Active Citizenship' Survey was comprised of a combination of questions eliciting scaled, open-ended, closed and partially-closed responses from each respondent. The survey was analysed using a two-stage approach. In the first stage, analyses of the two city-specific datasets (Melbourne and Brisbane) were performed at the level of the three cultural groups. In the second stage, datasets from Brisbane and Melbourne were combined and analysed in their totality. The second-stage analysis targeted a more limited set of questions identified by the research team and industry partners as specifically significant. These questions were then additionally analysed using a larger pool of variables selected for each individual question. These variables were: age, gender, religion, length of residence, and the country of birth. The report presents results from the first and second-stage analysis of the combined dataset.

It is important to note that due to the internal diversity of individual communities involved (e.g. age, period of residency, place of birth) and geographical specificities (state-based differences) the findings have limited generalizability potential.

Qualitative data were elicited through semi-structured interviews and six focus groups; one per migrant youth groups in each city (1 focus group x 3 groups x 2 cities). Several research assistants conducted the majority of the interviews over the course of the data collection phase. When possible and appropriate, interviews were conducted by research assistants of the similar ethnic backgrounds. Focus groups were facilitated by the research assistants and chief investigators.

Interview and focus group schedules were designed to further investigate and expand upon the themes from quantitative surveys. Broadly stated, interviews and focus groups included questions and themes pertaining to: a type and extent of network involvement (both formal and informal), reasons for participation, impact of network participation on the sense of belonging, social and practical barriers to network participation, perceived and measurable

outcomes of network engagement, intergeneration and intra-ethnic community issues, current issues facing refugee and migrant youth, and youth leadership initiatives.

As a part of the content analysis of qualitative data, a coding scheme was developed using NVIVO software. It was initially tested using data from both cities. New themes and concepts were added to the coding manual as they emerged. Altogether, twenty-one concepts were used as themes (corresponding to the themes explored in each of the interviews), with two of them (Formal Networks and Informal Networks) including several sub-themes. This first-stage content analysis was followed by second-stage content analysis, which included search terms pertinent to the new thematic sections included in this report. Content analysis was then linked to the contextual analysis of the data, which also followed thematic sections included in this report.

## Approach and Research Stages

Research for this Project was conducted in the following stages:

- Literature review
- Analysis of relevant policy documents
- Construction of quantitative surveys
- Design of qualitative interview themes
- Data collection: both qualitative and quantitative
- Data analysis including comparative accounts
- Synthesised discussion and report writing

To ensure the project is theoretically grounded, a critical review of the recent literature was undertaken to examine key debates relating to the themes of social networks, identity and belonging, citizenship, racism, social exclusion, migration and social capital. The theoretical review was supplemented by an analysis of relevant policy documents, recent programs and strategies taking place in Australia and more specifically in Victoria and Queensland to address youth and multicultural issues. Critical evaluation of these reviews and policies provided a background for the qualitative and quantitative surveys, interviews and focus groups that were conducted in Melbourne and Brisbane.

## Sample

### *Quantitative Sample*

A survey entitled 'Social Networks, Belonging and Active Citizenship among Migrant Youth in Australia' was conducted among 484 young people aged 15 to 23, in Brisbane and Melbourne, Australia. The survey was administered among three relatively evenly distributed participant groups which included youth from African, Pacific Island and Arabic-speaking backgrounds. There was also a relatively even distribution across the two cities: 252 youth from Melbourne participated in the survey (52.1%) as opposed to 232 youth from Brisbane (47.9%). Characteristics of the three cultural groups are described below:

**African youth:** For the African youth surveyed, the most common country of birth was Sudan (46%), followed by Ethiopia (14.3%) and Kenya (6.6%). These three leading countries of birth for the African group are all located in the East or the Horn of Africa. 74.9% of African respondents were Christian, while 15% were Muslim. Africans were most likely of all three participant groups to be born overseas or lived in the country for less than five years.

**Pacific Islander youth:** Among Pacific Island young people, the leading recorded country of birth was New Zealand (42.4%), followed by Australia (40.4%) and Samoa (9.8%). The majority of Pacific Island respondents were Christian (94.7%). Pacific Island young people were the most likely of those born overseas to have lived in Australia for more than ten years (53.2%).

**Arabic-speaking background youth:** For this group, Australia was the most common country of birth (50.6%), followed by Iraq (22.9%) and Lebanon (6.6%). It is important to note that 4.8% of the Arabic-speaking group were born in Sudan who were nevertheless included in the Arabic-speaking sample following their own self-reported 'cultural' affiliation with Arabic language. A majority (64.5%) of the Arabic-speaking youth were Muslim, while 32.5% were Christian. Brisbane and Melbourne samples have differed in regards to religious compositions, with Brisbane sample being predominantly Muslim (91.3%) while in Melbourne 37.8% of Arabic-speakers have been Muslim and 56.7% Christian. See Table 1 for the main characteristics of the sample at a glance.

Table 1: Survey Sample at a Glance

PARTICIPANT GROUP	TOP THREE COUNTRIES OF BIRTH	AGE		GENDER		LENGTH OF RESIDENCE IN AUSTRALIA				RELIGION	
		15-17 Y/O	18 >	MALE	FE-MALE	<5 YRS.	6-10 YRS.	11> YRS.	AUS-TRALIAN BORN	CHRIS-TIAN	MUS-LIM
AFRICAN	SUDAN: 46% ETHIOPIA: 14.3% KENYA: 6.6%	42.2%	56.6%	49.4%	50.6%	50.6%	34.9%	9.0%	3.0%	74.9%	15.0%
PACIFIC ISLANDERS	NEW ZEALAND: 42.4% AUSTRALIA: 40.4% SAMOA: 9.8%	46.4%	53%	42.4%	57.6%	5.9%	15.2%	27.2%	39.7%	94.7%	
ARABIC-SPEAKING	AUSTRALIA: 50.6% IRAQ: 22.9% LEBANON: 6.6%	39.4%	60.6%	47.9%	52.1%	20.0%	15.2%	12.7%	50.3%	64.5%	32.5%

## Qualitative Sample – Interviews and Focus Groups

Qualitative data was elicited through semi-structured interviews and focus groups across Melbourne and Brisbane. When it was possible and appropriate, interviews were conducted by research assistants of shared ethnic backgrounds (i.e. peer/insider interviewing).

Interview and focus group schedules were designed to further investigate and expand upon the themes explored in the surveys. Broadly stated, this included questions and themes pertaining to the type and extent of network involvement (formal and informal), reasons for participation, impact of network participation for sense of belonging, social and practical barriers to network participation, perceived and measurable outcomes of network engagement, intergeneration and intra-ethnic community issues, current issues facing refugee and migrant youth, youth leadership initiatives.

In total, fifty-seven interviews were conducted in Melbourne and forty-six in Brisbane. Across both sites, there was a fairly even distribution across each participant group. In both states, approximately thirty individuals from all three participant groups joined focus groups as a part of the Young Leaders Forum. Characteristics of each of the three groups are described below:

**African:** Across Melbourne and Brisbane, the African participants (like other survey respondents) were relatively recent arrivals to Australia. In Brisbane, the majority of participants were Sudanese, Ethiopian and Eritrean. These nationalities were also represented in Melbourne, alongside a few young people from Rwanda. Other represented nationalities included: Burundian, Liberian, Somali, Congolese, Ugandan, and Sierra Leonean. In both cities, there were more females than males. Additionally, in Brisbane the average age of respondents was higher (approximately 16-18 years) than Melbourne (approximately 15-16 years). However,

focus group participants' age in Melbourne was slightly higher than interviewees'. Focus group participants in Brisbane were approximately the same age as interviewees.

**Pacific Islands:** Across Melbourne and Brisbane, the majority of Pacific Island participants were from Samoan, Tongan and New Zealander backgrounds. Several interviewees also reported being half Samoan, half Tongan and a few indicated being half Australian. Many of those who reported being 'born overseas', were born in New Zealand, but have parents from other countries in the Pacific. In both Melbourne and Brisbane, more than half of respondents were female. Melbourne participants were typically younger than those in Brisbane.

**Arabic-speaking youth:** Interview and focus group participants in Melbourne and Brisbane were predominantly of Iraqi and Lebanese backgrounds. However, in Brisbane there were several interviewees from Egypt and of mixed backgrounds. In Melbourne, there were a couple of Palestinian participants. Brisbane had a relatively older cohort with the majority of participants were in the 18-22 years age range. Melbourne sample was evenly divided between older participants (20 year of age and older), predominantly girls, and younger participants (15-18 years of age), where there were more boys than girls. For interpretation of the results it is important to note that all but two Brisbane participants were Muslims, while in Melbourne, a majority of respondents were Christians.

Throughout the data analysis and discussion below, formal networks refer to government agencies (i.e. schools), social support services (i.e. community support services and organised sports) while informal networks refer to family, peer group and sub-cultural groups. Discussions with regards to 'community' are in reference to a set of different groups defined by specific language, culture and/or cultural values to which a set of other group identifications (religious, regional, those of extended family) are commonly attached.



# SECTION 2.

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Over the last few years, there has been a rise in interest in research focusing on the individual and structural factors which impact the formation and sustenance of networks amongst immigrant groups (see Eve 2010; Ryan 2011). Additionally, several recent reports have investigated network formation and engagement trends amongst culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) individuals more broadly, including second generation (Butcher 2008). Findings typically reveal that migrants and refugees, as well as young people of CALD backgrounds, engage predominantly with ethnically homogenous groups (Willoughby 2007). Indeed, network member composition in this research, in terms of 'background' are similar to findings from the Australian Bureau of Statistics General Social Survey (2010) which suggest that, in friendship groups, 73% of respondents stated that all or most of their friends were of the same ethnic network, with little difference across the age groups. For people of migrant and refugee backgrounds, this proportion is typically higher. However, findings presented herein illustrate that engagement in culturally homogenous networks does not correspond with a desire for ethno-specific socialization. Rather, the participants in this project engaged in ethno-specific groups activities because of community and family pressures and despite their own strong desire for cross-cultural engagement.

Existing research highlights the effects of cross-cultural network engagement and the benefits of having positive feelings about one's identity and cultural diversity in general. For example, several studies have reported that positive feelings about one's own ethnic identity can foster psycho-social wellbeing, prevent problematic behaviour and encourage civic engagement (Flanagan & Faison 2001; Scales, Benson, and Leffert 2000). This has prompted some to call for services which help cultivate positive self-identity as a means to promote or facilitate cross-cultural interaction (Johnson et al. 2000). Other research by Herbert and colleagues (2003) suggests that, similar to findings presented herein, young people of migrant and refugee background engage (or want to engage) in certain networks in a strategic manner, using affiliations with certain individuals or groups to acquire resources, foster a sense of belonging or reframe their post-immigration identity.

On the policy front, encouraging the participation of young people across a wide breadth of diverse networks has become a key platform at both the federal and state level. This is arguably due to the purported link between engagement in diverse networks and the broader social cohesion agenda, as illustrated by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship's recently implemented Diversity and Social Cohesion Program (2011-2012). At a state level the aim of facilitating cross-cultural networks engagement is demonstrated in Queensland's Multicultural

Policy (2011), particularly its Inclusive Communities initiative which advocates for young people's access to and participation in a range of multicultural networks. In Victoria, the 2009 Multicultural Policy All of Us also endorses commitment to 'bringing together people across cultures and faiths'. Among the goals of the new Victorian Youth Statement and Strategy titled Engage, Involve, Create (2012) are 'involvement' of young people 'in communities'. This is to be achieved through strengthening their connections with families, peers and the community and 'creating culture', which includes 'recognising and celebrating the religious, ethnic and indigenous cultures and subcultures'.

Our findings show that participants from Pacific Island, African and Arabic-speaking groups all expressed a clear desire for cross-cultural engagement. This was evident in both the qualitative and quantitative data. However, the reasons for wanting to engage and the degree to which this was desired varied considerably between the three groups. For the African participants, cross-cultural engagement represented a form of demonstrating awareness of the national cultural values. That is, the more multicultural their networks became the more they felt a sense of belonging to Australia and the more they felt 'Australian'. For Pacific Island participants, the desire for cross-cultural engagement was stemming from an aspiration to go beyond of what was commonly perceived as their homogeneous networks. Pacific Island participants were heavily involved in their community and their church and felt they had neither the time nor the ability (given practical and social barriers) to engage with people outside of their group. For the Arabic speaking participants, cross-cultural engagement was a way in which they could counter stereotypes and promote knowledge about their own religion and culture. This section provides an overview of cross-cultural engagement as it relates to three groups. It also describes barriers facing each group which inhibit their ability to engage with people outside of their ethnic community.

## Forming Networks

Data on network formation were elicited by asking participant where the easiest way to meet people was. The findings show that the most commonly used networks accessed by the three groups to meet and connect with other people are school (69.8%) and family/family friends (61.2%). Arabic-speaking and African young people find it the easiest to meet people through school while for Pacific Islanders the easiest way is through family and family friends. Other venues such as social networking sites (33.1%), places of worship (33.1%), recreation clubs (30.8%), workplaces (26.2%) and popular hangout spots were also used to meet people to varying degrees across the three groups. Further details are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Responses to survey question 'Easiest way to meet people...'

	'EASIEST WAY TO MEET PEOPLE IS THROUGH...'	TOTAL SAMPLE	AFRICAN YOUTH	PACIFIC ISLANDER	ARABIC-SPEAKING YOUTH
1	SCHOOL/TAFE/UNIVERSITY ACTIVITIES	69.8%	71.9%	60.9%	75.9%
2	FAMILY AND FAMILY FRIENDS	61.2%	61.7%	66.9%	55.4%
3	RECREATION CLUBS (SPORTS, ARTS, ETC.)	30.8%	41.3%	36.4%	15.1%
4	MY CHURCH, MOSQUE, PLACE OF WORSHIP	33.1%	31.1%	47.7%	21.7%
5	SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES	33.1%	26.9%	41.7%	31.3%
6	GOING TO POPULAR HANGOUT SPOTS	20.5%	24.6%	19.2%	17.5%
7	MY JOB	26.2%	19.2%	27.8%	31.9%
8	OTHER	4.1%	1.8%	9.9%	1.2%

Influencing factors in network involvement were further explored in the qualitative data which reveal that for African Youth (relatively recent arrivals, largely of refugee background) network engagement was typically framed around accessing services. For Pacific Islander interviewees, engagement in formal and informal networks was typically grounded in their obligations towards family, religious practice and community. The Arabic-speaking group presented a more complex scenario. In Melbourne, Arabic-speaking interviewees were predominantly Christian, with majority of them having Lebanese or Iraqi background. In contrast, in Brisbane all but one interviewee were Muslim. As such, our Melbourne sample had an over-representation of Christian Arabic-speaking participants relative to the broader Australian population as well as an over-representation of Christians relative to the Victorian-based population<sup>1</sup>. However, this variance in sample provided notable distinctions in the ways in which young Arabic-speakers from different backgrounds engaged in formal and informal networks which will be discussed in further detail in Section 2.3.

Despite extensive participation in churches, mosques and other places of worship, both within their own neighbourhood

and outside of it (see section 2.2 below) participants in all three groups reported that these were not easy places to meet new people. A clear majority of Arabic-speaking youth indicated that it is not easy to meet people at their place of worship, with 78.3% answering 'No' and only 21.7% answering 'Yes'. A similar pattern existed among the African respondents – 31.1% answered 'Yes' and 68.9% answered 'No'. Pacific Islanders were more inclined to indicate that it is easy to meet people at their place of worship – 47.7% answered 'Yes' while a slightly higher proportion, 51.7%, answered 'No'. There were no major differences in responding to this question between Melbourne and Brisbane, except among the Pacific Islander group. In Melbourne, young Pacific Islanders were more likely to say that it is not easy to meet people in their place of worship than that it is easy while the situation was reversed in Brisbane.

### Where Social Networks are situated

In order to understand where the young people's networks were situated, participants were asked where they preferred to spend time within their own neighbourhood as well as outside of it. Within their own neighbourhood, the 'Shopping Centre' was the most popular place to spend time (56.8%), followed by the 'Park' (47.9%) and 'Movie Theatre' (45.9%). Church, mosque or place of worship followed after that (40.3%), preceding 'Sports Facilities', 'Library', 'Community Centre' and 'Other'. The Community Centre (besides 'Other') was the least popular place to spend time within the neighbourhood, with only 14.5% of youth indicating that they spend time there. African youth expressed the most interest in going to the Community Centre, but this was still

1. According to Victoria Multicultural Commission (2013), the majority of the Arabic-speaking population in Victoria are Muslim. Migration of the two most represented Arabic-speaking groups in Melbourne (Lebanese and Iraqi) was very distinct. As most of the Lebanese Christians and Lebanese Muslims are well-established in Australia, with the majority of Lebanese Christians having migrated after the WW1 and WW2 and Lebanese Muslims after the 1975 Lebanese civil, the majority of Iraqis are more recent settlers in Australia. Majority of Iraqi population is from Muslim background (Shia or Sunni), and there are smaller numbers of Kurds (Muslim Sunni), Chaldeans and Assyrians (Christians groups).

less than a quarter (24%) of this particular group. African youth also differed from the other two groups in that, while the shopping centre was the most common response for Pacific Islander and Arabic-speaking youth, followed by the

'Movie Theatre', the African group preferred to spend time at sports facilities (57.5%) or outside, in the park (55.7%). Sports facilities were particularly unpopular among Arabic-speakers, with the vast majority (80.1%) indicating as such.

*Table 3: Preferred place to spend time in own neighbourhood*

	PREFERRED PLACE TO SPEND TIME IN OWN NEIGHBOURHOOD	TOTAL SAMPLE	AFRICAN YOUTH	PACIFIC ISLANDER YOUTH	ARABIC-SPEAKING YOUTH
1	SPORTS FACILITIES	39.3%	57.5%	40.4%	19.9%
2	PARK	47.9%	55.7%	46.4%	41.6%
3	SHOPPING CENTRE	56.8%	47.3%	66.9%	57.2%
4	CHURCH, MOSQUE, PLACE OF WORSHIP	40.3%	41.9%	45.0%	34.3%
5	MOVIE THEATRE	45.9%	38.9%	47.7%	51.2%
6	LIBRARY	24.8%	31.1%	21.2%	21.7%
7	COMMUNITY CENTRE	14.5%	24.0%	10.6%	8.4%
8	OTHER	6.8%	6.0%	11.3%	3.6%

When respondents were asked to identify places they liked to go outside of their own neighbourhoods, the most preferred place overall, across states and groups was 'church, mosque or place of worship' (49%), even though a shopping centre was still only slightly less popular (48.8%), followed by the 'library' (47.7%), 'sports facilities' (36%),

'movie theatre' (34.4%), 'community centre' (25.2%), 'park' (23.6%) and 'other' (21.3%). There were differences between the three groups in regards to this question. For instance, places of worship were visited by less Arabic speakers than African and Pacific Islander (see Table 4 below).

*Table 4: Preferred place to spend time outside of own neighbourhood*

	PREFERRED PLACE TO SPEND TIME OUTSIDE OF OWN NEIGHBOURHOOD	TOTAL SAMPLE	AFRICAN YOUTH	PACIFIC ISLANDER YOUTH	ARABIC-SPEAKING YOUTH
1	LIBRARY	47.7%	51.5%	47.0%	44.4%
2	CHURCH, MOSQUE, PLACE OF WORSHIP	49.0%	50.9%	58.3%	38.6%
3	SHOPPING CENTRE	48.8%	48.5%	54.3%	44.0%
4	SPORTING FACILITIES	36.0%	45.5%	41.7%	21.1%
5	MOVIE THEATRE	34.3%	35.3%	34.4%	33.1%
6	PARK	23.6%	25.7%	21.9%	22.9%
7	COMMUNITY CENTRE	25.2%	24.0%	30.5%	21.7%
8	OTHER	21.3%	22.8%	26.5%	15.1%

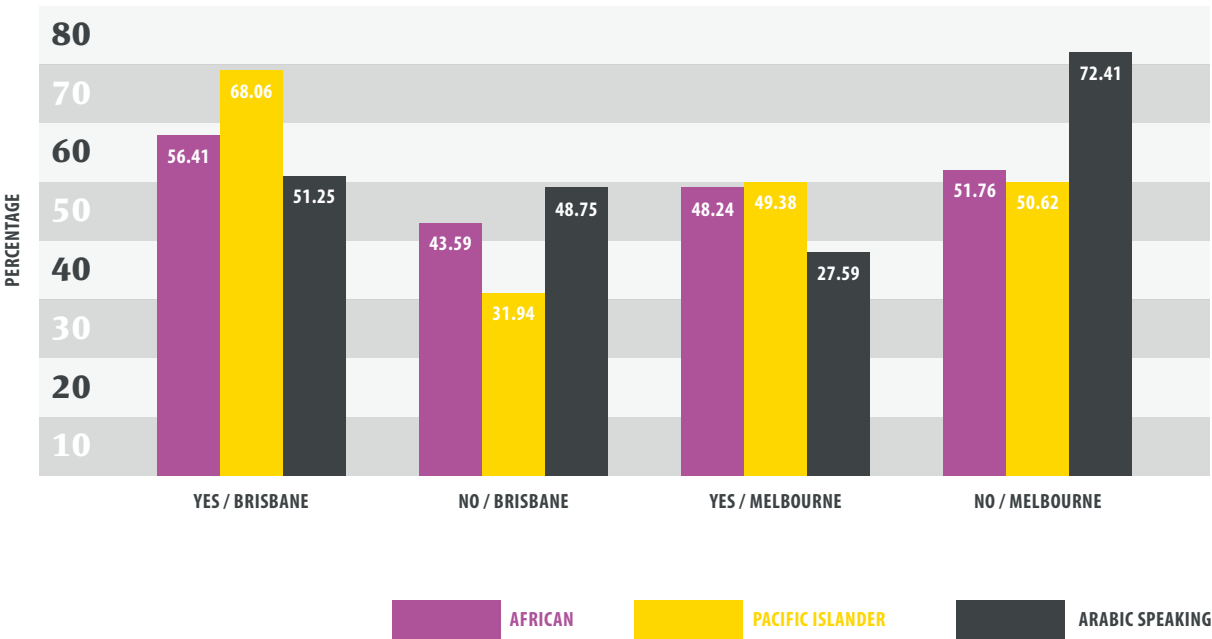




Overall, a church, mosque or other place of worship was the most frequented place by the respondents when they spent time outside of their neighbourhood. This was particularly the case for the African (50.9%) and Pacific Islander (58.3%) participants. The Arabic speakers, however, did not show such a high level of support for going to the place of worship with only 38.6% attending. Comparison

between the two states shows that participation in the place of worship was higher among all three groups in Brisbane than in Melbourne. Church was a place to go when outside of the neighbourhood for many Pacific Islander youth in Brisbane. This was also a significant place to visit for Africans and Arabic-Speaking youth in Brisbane. See Figure 1 for a comparison between Melbourne and Brisbane respondents.

Figure 1: I prefer to spend time at my church, mosque or other place of worship



Another popular place to go to outside of the participants own neighbourhood was the library. This was particularly the case among the Arabic-speaking young people in Brisbane with 72.5% selecting this option. As a comparison, almost the same number, 68.6% of young Arabic-speaking youth from Melbourne, instead opted for a 'shopping centre'. The library was generally a more popular place to go for young people in all groups in Queensland compared to Melbourne, where it did not rate as highly across the groups.

As more than three-quarters of young people surveyed (76.4% of the overall sample) visited places outside of their neighbourhoods every day, almost every day or at least once a week, these are highly relevant and attest to the relative mobility of young people in fostering and maintaining informal social networks. This finding was

consistent across all participant groups, with 73.1% of Africans, 80.1% of Pacific Islanders and 76.5% of Arabic speakers indicating that they spend every day, almost every day or at least one day a week outside of their neighbourhood.

### Types of Social Networks

Young people who participated in the project had a tendency to engage in a wide range of social networks. In order to gauge the nature of young people's social networks, the survey asked the question 'Have you been involved in any of the following in the past year?' and respondents were asked to tick all that applied from the following list: school-based group, ethnic community group, recreational group (e.g. sports, arts, dance), religious group, volunteer group and other.



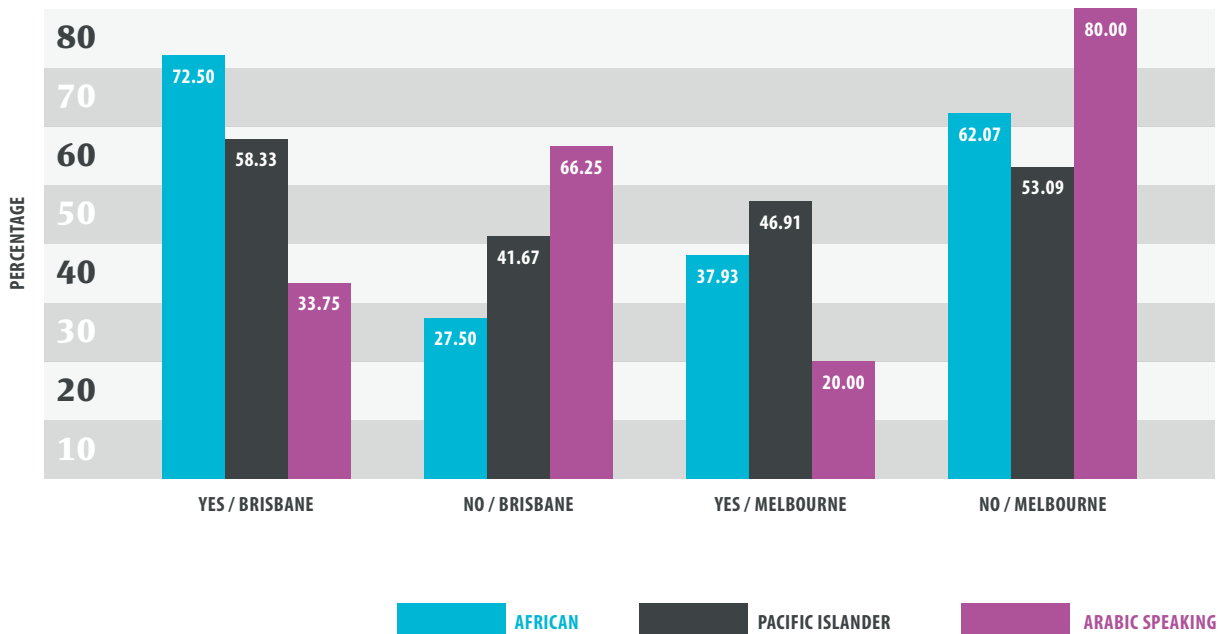
Table 5: Involvement in social groups in the past year

	TYPE OF SOCIAL GROUP	WHOLE SAMPLE	AFRICAN YOUTH	PACIFIC ISLANDER YOUTH	ARABIC-SPEAKING YOUTH
1	RELIGIOUS GROUPS	44.4%	54.5%	52.3%	29.8%
2	SCHOOL-BASED GROUPS	43.0%	44.3%	40.4%	44.2%
3	RECREATION GROUP	39.5%	42.5%	45.7%	33.8%
4	VOLUNTEER GROUPS	36.8%	35.9%	40.4%	37.7%
5	ETHNIC COMMUNITY GROUP	34.9%	52.7%	28.5%	25.2%
6	OTHER	19.0%	13.8%	27.8%	17.9%

Religious groups were the most commonly nominated as a vehicle for involvement in social activities among young people in the overall sample (44%), followed by

school-based (43.0%) and recreation groups (39.5%). However, there were some differences between the two states as illustrated in Figure 2 below:

Figure 2: Involved in religious groups



Melbourne-based young people in general were less likely to participate in religious groups, while in Brisbane the frequency of such participation by young people was much higher. The highest participation rate in religious organisations in Melbourne was recorded among the Pacific Islanders (46.9%) and Africans (37.9%). A considerably lower

interest in participating was found among Arabic speakers (20%). By comparison, in Brisbane 73.4% of Africans and 59.2% of Pacific Islanders were participating in religious groups in the last year, but there was lower participation in such groups among Arabic speakers (33.8%).

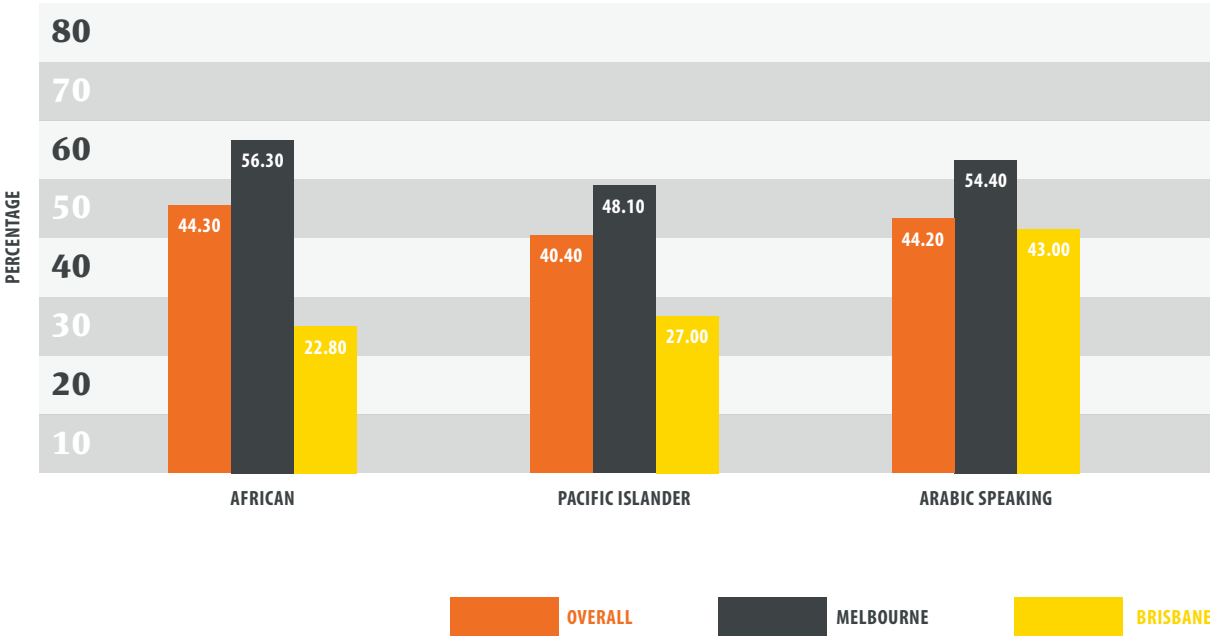
In regards to the school-based groups, there were consistent responses from all participants in the overall sample that suggest that less than half of young people are participating in such groups. Slightly more active participation was observed among African (44.3%) and Arabic-speaking youth (44.2%), compared to 40.4% of Pacific Islanders. The Melbourne sample were much more actively involved in school based groups which is likely to be a reflection, in some part, of the school-based recruitment strategy employed in this location. In Melbourne, 56.3% of African youth, 54.4% of Arabic speakers and 48.1% of Pacific Island young people admitted to being involved in a school based group

Comparatively fewer youth in Queensland had been active in the school-based groups in the past year. Figure 3 shows that only 22.8% of African and 27.0% of Pacific

Island youth indicated such type of involvement. The Arabic speaking group from Queensland has been particularly strongly involved in school based groups (43%).

Comparison of the responses from Melbourne youth with those from Brisbane in the question about school-based groups again shows a disparity in participation between the two cities. While a majority of youth (53.5%) in Melbourne have been active in school-based groups in the past year, with African (56.3%) and Arabic-speaking youth (54.4%) being particularly active, in Brisbane the participation rate is considerably lower. In Brisbane, only 31.6% of respondents have been active in school based groups. In particular, low numbers of African (22.8%) and Pacific Islander youth (27.0%) indicated that they have been involved in school based groups in the past year in Brisbane.

Figure 3: Involvement in school based groups in the past year



Overall, low interest was shown in participating in community groups, with only 34.9% responding that they had been in active in such a group in the past year. This is particularly the case for Pacific Islander and Arabic-speaking respondents. Only 22.9% of Arabic-speaking respondents and 28.5% of Pacific Islanders have been involved in such groups in the past year. In contrast, a slight majority of African respondents (52.7%) indicated that they were involved in a community group in the past year.

Volunteer groups were not particularly popular among the studied groups. Only 36.8% of respondents indicated that

they had taken part in a volunteer group in the past year. This result was consistent across all three participant groups: 36% for African participants, 33.8% for Pacific Islanders and a slightly higher rate of 40.4% for Arabic speakers. However, some disparity between the two states also occurs in this regard. While in Melbourne involvement in volunteer groups was consistent with the latest national average statistics (from 2004) which reported that around 30% of people in this age group in Australia volunteer (Volunteering Australia 2012), in Brisbane young people reported more enthusiasm in being involved in such groups, especially among Pacific Islanders (67.6%) and Africans (51.9%).



Insights from the qualitative data provide a more nuanced understanding about the network choices within and across the three groups. Pacific Islander young people reported extensive involvement in church and cultural activities including culturally-based dance groups, choirs, art classes and language classes. Young people also reported their involvement in formal sports teams, most often rugby. These 'sports-based' networks also typically had close ties to other established networks and thus member composition was often intermixed within the various existing networks. Across Melbourne and Brisbane, the vast majority of formal networks within which young Pacific Islanders engaged were relatively local, with the exception to their use of social media to connect with family and friends overseas. Looking broadly at informal networks of Pacific Islander interviewees references to informal sports, music, family and friendship groups were most common. Interviewees placed importance on their time with, and involvement in family-based networks.

*I spend a lot of time with my family, whether it's my immediate or extended one (Pacific Islander, Female, Brisbane)*

Additionally, interviewees spent a substantial amount of time socializing informally with the same people with whom they participate in formal networks. As such, member composition between formal and informal networks is typically fluid and over-lapping. Informal networks tend to consist of males and females, are often composed of extended families (Brisbane) who share specific ethnic backgrounds (Brisbane) and are locally situated (Brisbane). An exception to this is the use of Facebook, for which young people's networks appeared to be more diverse.

The African interviewees, as previously mentioned were relatively recent arrivals (less than 10 years in Australia) and from refugee backgrounds. For this group of interviewees, network engagement was typically framed around accessing services that are specifically designed and funded for refugees, humanitarian migrants and/or asylum seekers, and supported either by state or federal governments, corporate partners, philanthropic organizations or individuals. For this reason, our sample was initially recruited through the network of service providers:

*When we get here, there are people here (service providers) that help us and show us around. (African, Male, Brisbane)*

Or

*They pick us up at the airport. They help us, like they have a Homework Club. (African, Female, Brisbane)*

Initial network involvement for African youth was influenced by the type of visa and subsequent access

to services. Those young people who had access to the HSS services were engaged more in formal networks which were facilitated by service providers. Those who came via family sponsorship had less contact with the formally established services. Additionally, in Brisbane it appeared that network engagement changed substantially as period of settlement increased.

Looking broadly at formal networks of African interviewees, references to church groups, settlement service activities (including homework clubs, camps, etc.), and sports teams were most common.

Sporting teams, while also often facilitated through service providers (especially early in settlement) were also commonly referenced throughout interviews as a way to make friends and participate in networks:

*When I get involved in sports, that's when I go to know people. Only then. (African, Male, Brisbane)*

As formal network participation was often facilitated through engagement with service providers, network member composition was often pre-determined through that mechanism. For this reason, particularly during the early stages of settlement, African interviewees predominantly engaged with other Africans who were also utilizing services and with whom they could communicate.

Type of informal network engagement and extent of participation varied within this group depending on settlement experience, type of sponsorship, availability of family networks and geographic location. Indeed, in addition to being a place where assistance is sought, young people perceived service provider organizations as a place where 'you can meet a lot of people' (Melbourne). Plainly stated, the type and extent of informal network participation for this group was influenced by a range of factors including geographic location, period of settlement, sponsorship pathway and English proficiency. The analysis of interview data shows that while both male and female interviewees placed high importance on participation in informal networks (particularly youth based networks), young males appeared to be more actively involved in a range of informal networks than their female counterparts.

Unlike Pacific Islander and Arabic-speaking youth, the use of social media (and technology more broadly) for African interviewees was limited, particularly for those recently arrived. Those who did participate in online networks mainly communicated with other African young people living in close physical proximity and who they also say in school, church, etc. Also unlike the other two groups transnational communication was at best sporadic and limited.

Arabic-speaking interviewees were reportedly active in both formal and informal networks. Engagement in formal networks was particularly high, with young people participating in activities ranging from volunteer work (e.g. Cancer Council), formal social clubs (Al-Nisa Women’s group), and networks within their specific place of worship (e.g. church or mosque). Participation in informal networks was also commonly mentioned throughout the interviews with Arabic-speaking young people. Interviewees were active in friendship groups, informal sporting activities, social media networks, to name a few:

*On Facebook forums, like threads and then we organize events. Like the beach, BBQ (Arabic-speaking, male, Brisbane).*

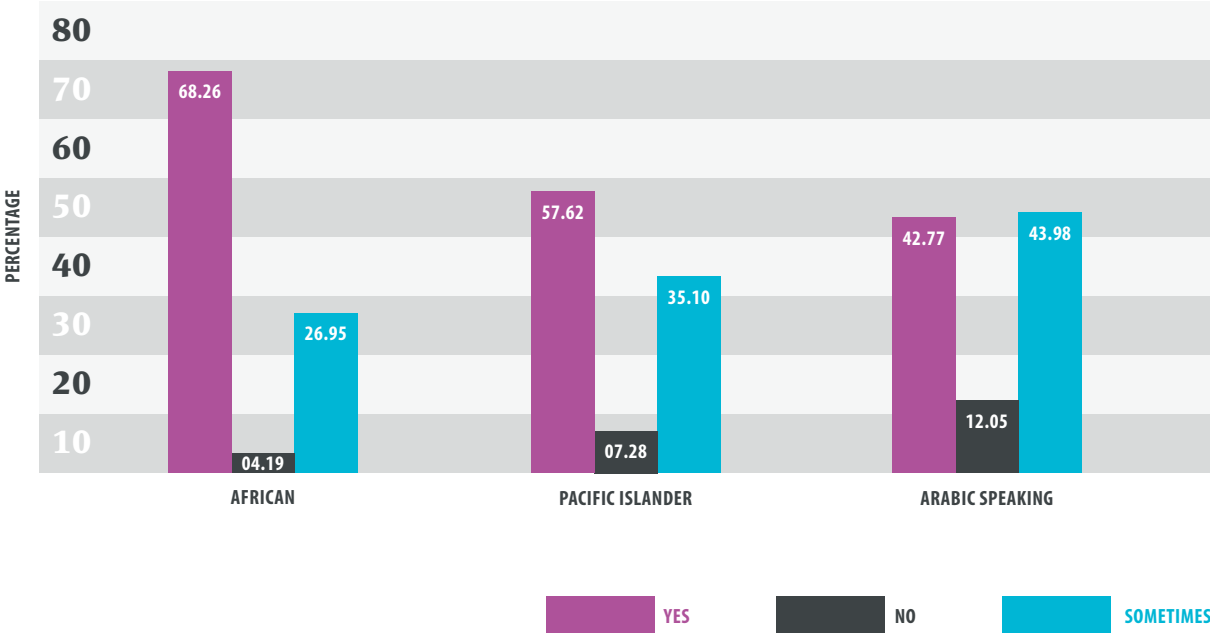
Reasons for not participating in social activities and social groups or barriers to participation were similar across all participant groups. A major hindrance was found in ‘being too busy’: 37.7% of Africans, 34.3% of Pacific

Islanders and 36.7% of Arabic speakers listed this as the reason for non-participation. Young people were well informed about the coming activities and events in their communities. Significantly fewer respondents indicated that a lack of knowledge/awareness was a significant reason for not participating in activities. Only 22.8% of Africans, 20.5% of Pacific Islanders and 9.6% of Arabic speakers listed a reason of ‘Not knowing about social events’. Also a lack of transport did not appear as a barrier to participation in the surveys. The largest number of people who indicated that ‘Not having transport’ was an issue is found among African respondents (18 %) and Pacific Islander respondents (16.3%). In comparison, a lower percentage of 7.8% of Arabic speakers listed this reason.

**Who Is Involved In The Social Networks?**

Overall, there were a significant number of participants interested in being involved in activities within their family and ethnic group (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Involvement in activities within family/ethnic group



Qualitative data shows that for Pacific Islander young people, both formal and informal networks were closely tied to their family and ethnic groups. For example, the same people with whom young people attended church, were also on their rugby team, in their choir etc. Certain

networks, typically church or culturally-based (language, dance, etc...) were sometimes differentiated by specific Pacific Island regions. As one participant explains,

*Yeah, just my church that we go to. So a Wesleyan Methodist Tongan church - they're all pretty much Tongan. But it's really mixed families there that are all half-caste Tongan - some half-Australian, half-Samoan, half-something else, I don't know.' (Pacific Islander, Male, Brisbane)*

And while some formal networks were ethno-specific, others were not. Young people tended to perceive their places of employment and study as being more multicultural than their mono-cultural Pacific Islander networks:

*There are a lot of Multicultural things for people at school, but once you leave school, it's just us (Pacific Islanders). (Pacific Islander, Female, Brisbane)*

Or

*In church it's only Samoans. At work, it's others. It just depends on where you are. (Female, Brisbane)*

There did appear to be variance between the ethnic make-up of Pacific Islanders' networks in Melbourne and Brisbane. Interviews indicate that participants residing in Brisbane appeared to engage in more ethnically homogenous formal and informal networks than those in Melbourne. This may be due to the difference in population size of Pacific Islanders in the two cities (with Brisbane's Pacific Islander population being comparatively larger) and more centralized areas in which Pacific Islanders live in Brisbane.

For the African participants with family living nearby, engagement in family-based networks was high. The same was true for those living in areas with receptive local, neighbourhood networks or who lived relatively close to an established 'ethnic' community through which informal connections were made. Without these resources being accessible, interviewees typically relied on formal networks to shape informal connections.

For Muslim interviewees in Brisbane all participation in formal networks was facilitated through their ties to their mosque. As a result, network member composition was typically the same across networks (both formal and informal); meaning that the same groups of young people were spending substantial amounts of time together (though doing many different activities). For the Muslim sub-group, formal networks were gender-specific or mixed, depending on the particular activity. For the group of people participating in the Arabic-speaking focus group in Melbourne, formal network participation was not limited to those facilitated through their place of worship. In fact, several interviewees rejected any religious-based activities (aside from church services). This finding can be backed up by the quantitative data, which showed that 20% of Arabic-speaking respondents were participating in a religious group. By comparison, a

higher proportion (almost 34%) was participating in such groups in Brisbane. As a whole, this group participated in significantly more heterogeneous formal networks.

*The activities that I wouldn't join are... the Islamic activities... Although it's my religion, but I just wouldn't join it. I would join Arab activities like ... anything to do with Arab, because it's general, it's all religions. But Muslim... I don't know what information they're going to give me. I wouldn't join a special religious activity, something to do with religion (Arabic-speaking, female, Melbourne).*

*Islamic society unfortunately represents Muslims born in Australia, I don't feel like they represent me who came later (Arabic-speaking, female, Melbourne).*

Again, as with the formal network participation, for young interviewees of Muslim backgrounds, informal network members were also members of their mosque with whom they also participated in formal networks. While the 'source' of networks varied for this group, both Christian and Muslim Arabic speakers noted how their 'background' (however they defined this) influenced, and in some circumstances dictated, type and extent of formal and informal networks involvement:

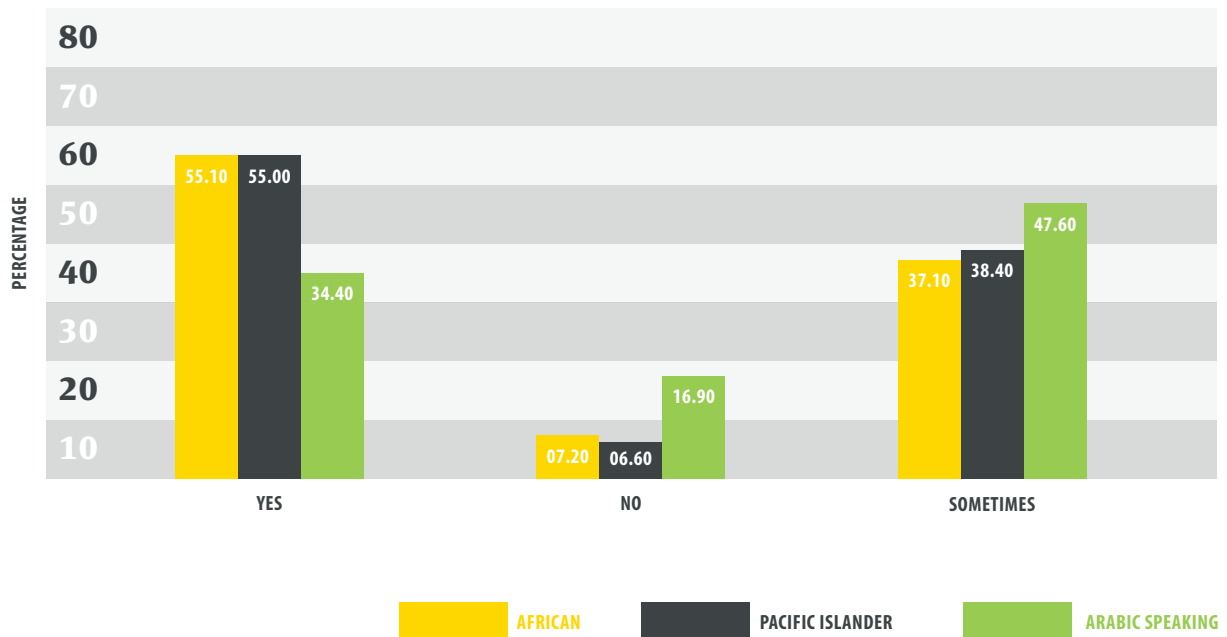
*Most of the community won't go clubbing or go to bars. So that's not a network choice. We'll engage with everyone but sometimes it's dictated by your background (Arabic-speaking, Male, Brisbane).*

*What me and our friends, Muslim, Arabic, non-Muslim feel is... there is not much to do if you go out. Everyone is getting drunk and you don't want to drink... Or, sometimes you don't want to eat, it's all about eating... You just want to socialise! And I find this all the time: In the Muslim/ Arabic culture people think I am too liberal and then others think I'm too conservative... It's important that I believe in myself, but at the same time it's not so much fun to be alone, because you can't relate to people and people can't relate to you (Arabic-speaking, Female, Melbourne).*

The influence of 'background' was evident in the gender breakdown within the formal and informal networks of interviewees. This was a trend across the Melbourne and Brisbane sample, though was slightly more pronounced for the Muslim sub-group where the majority of informal networks, and many of the formal networks, were gender-specific. There was also a relationship between age of respondents, settlement period and type of network involvement, particularly for the Victorian interviewees.

Similarly, there was a very strong interest among young people to be involved in activities happening outside of their families or communities (see Figure 5).

Figure 5: Involvement in activities outside of family/ethnic group



The respondents were asked about the people with whom they spent most of their time during the week and on the weekends. It revealed that during the week a large proportion of young people spend time with people of the same age (61%), gender (53.1%) and religion (50.8%).

Overall, there were no major differences between the groups; Arabic speakers were spending almost equal time with people of the same religion (56.6%) and with people of the same age (56.0%). 'Age' was the most common answer in the other two groups (63.5% of Africans and 63.6% of Pacific Islanders).

Spending time with people of the same gender was more prominent among the Pacific Islanders (60.3%), followed by the Arabic-speaking youth (52.4%) and Africans (47.3%). Spending time with people of the same religion during the week was the least common answer among Pacific Islanders (43%) whereas it was similarly popular among the other two groups (52.1% of Africans and 56.6% of Pacific Islanders).

In Brisbane, Pacific Islanders were more likely to spend time with people of the same gender (70%) whereas in Melbourne more of them opted for the same age (63.6%). Arabic speakers in Brisbane most commonly socialised with people of the same age (63.8%) while in Melbourne religion (56.6%) and age (56.0%) were equally relevant. African young people in both Brisbane and Melbourne most commonly chose 'the same age' of people they most commonly associated with during the week.

Information about spending time on the weekends was somewhat different. Overall, the most common denominator for people with whom respondents spent time with outside of school and work and on the weekend was 'from the extended family' (65.3%), followed closely by 'the same religion' (64.7%) and then the 'same age' (48.3%).

Spending time with people of the same gender (45.2%) proved less popular and the least common was 'with the same level of education' (35.1%). The responses were almost even among the three groups in the overall sample.

It was slightly more common for African and Pacific Islander young people to answer that they spend time with the extended family, followed by people of the same religion. With Arabic speakers this was reversed: 64.2% of them spent time with people of the same religious background compared with 60.6% spending time with the family. Since these two things often intermingle, this minor difference may be insignificant. People that all three groups spent the least amount of time outside of school, work and/or on the weekends, were those with the same level of education.

SECTION 3.  
ATTITUDES  
ASSOCIATED WITH  
SOCIAL NETWORKS

# ATTITUDES ASSOCIATED WITH SOCIAL NETWORKS

## Social Resources

Participants in the survey were asked about whom they would seek help from if they were sick, if they needed to talk about a serious personal matter, if they were feeling sad and wanted to talk to someone or if they urgently needed money. Respondents were asked to mark all that apply:

- Family member
- Workmate
- Friend
- Religious leader or elder
- Neighbour
- Don't know

'Family member' was by far the most preferred category to seek help from in case of illness, personal matter or if in urgent need for money. However, if they were feeling sad they would more likely to approach a friend rather than family members (see Table 6 below).

Almost 95% of the overall sample responded that they would seek help from a 'family member' in case of illness. This result was consistent across all participant groups: 99.3% of Pacific Islanders, 93.4% of Arabic

speakers and 91.0% of Africans. A neighbour would be the least likely person to go to in case of illness.

Asking for help from a case in the case of 'a serious personal matter' among Pacific Islander and African youth, was almost as common as asking for help from a family member (64.2% among Pacific Islanders and 59.3% among Africans). Again, asking a neighbour was the least preferred option.

If they were feeling sad, close to two thirds of young people would seek help from a friend. Feeling sad was the only condition for which respondents would seek help from a friend over their family. This was the most common response for Africans (67.7%), followed by Pacific Islanders (66.2%) and Arabic speakers (61.4%). Among the three groups, most of the Pacific Islanders (52.3%) would seek help also from a family member, though this was a relatively popular option also for Arabic speakers (51.2%) and Africans (47.9%). When feeling sad, asking help from a neighbour was an extremely uncommon option (0.4%). In the case of urgently needing money, a family member was the first person young people across the groups were most likely to turn to for help (89.3% overall), with 92.1% of Pacific Islanders, 89.2% of Arabic speakers and 86.8% of Africans saying they would do so (see Table 6 for details).

Table 6: Total sample: 'to whom would you go if you were...'

WOULD GO TO A...	SICK	URGENTLY NEEDED MONEY FOR AN EMERGENCY	HAVE A SERIOUS PERSONAL MATTER	SAD
FAMILY MEMBER	94.4%	89.3%	62.0%	50.4%
WORKMATE	2.5%	3.1%	5.4%	5.2%
FRIEND	26.9%	28.9%	57.4%	65.1%
RELIGIOUS LEADER OR ELDER	3.9%	2.7%	7.6%	7.2%
NEIGHBOUR	1.7%	0.6%	0.4%	0.4%
DON'T KNOW WHO TO SEEK HELP FROM	1.9%	3.7%	4.5%	5.6%



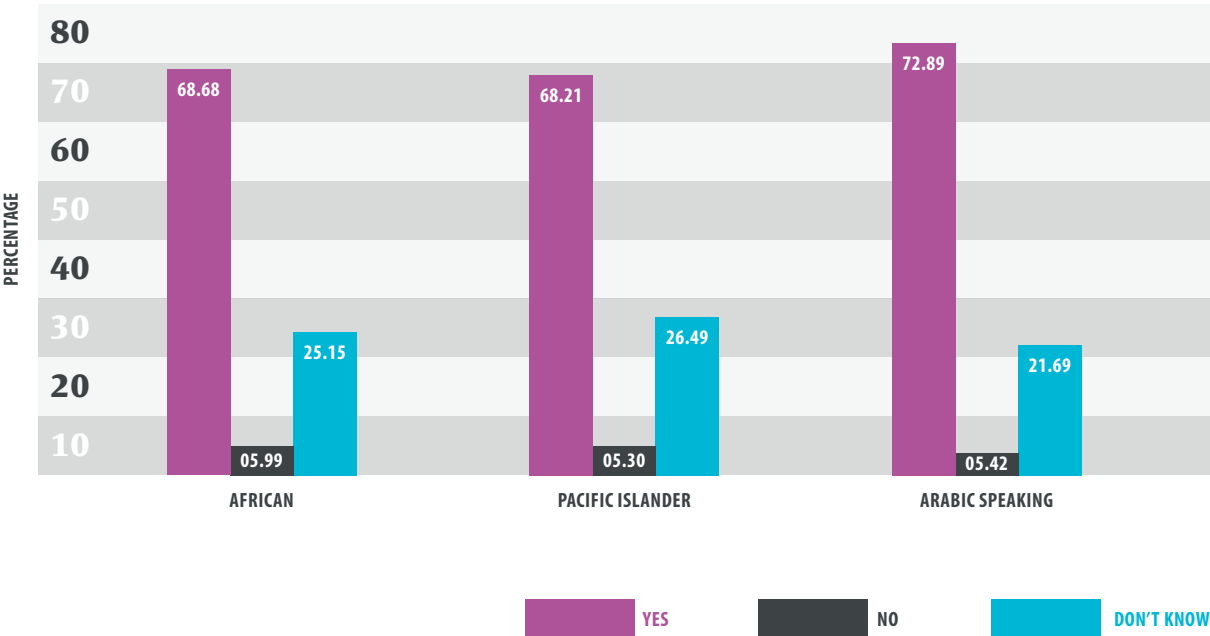
### International Connections

The findings indicate that feeling 'happy' is the most common response generated when keeping in contact with people overseas for the study's respondents. . 72.1% of respondents answered this way and this was even across participant groups. Keeping in contact with people overseas also allowed the respondents to develop notions of trust towards family and friends, which was the second most popular response (29.5%), and to experience and demonstrate feelings of belonging (27.1%).

### Family Expectations and Family Values

We recorded perceptions of family attitudes about being involved in different activities with diverse range of people. The respondents were asked to respond 'Yes,' 'No' or 'Don't Know' to the statement, 'My family/guardian is happy for me to be involved in different activities and have friends from different ethnic and religious backgrounds' (Figure 6).

Figure 6: My family/guardian is happy for me to be involved in activities and have friends from different backgrounds.



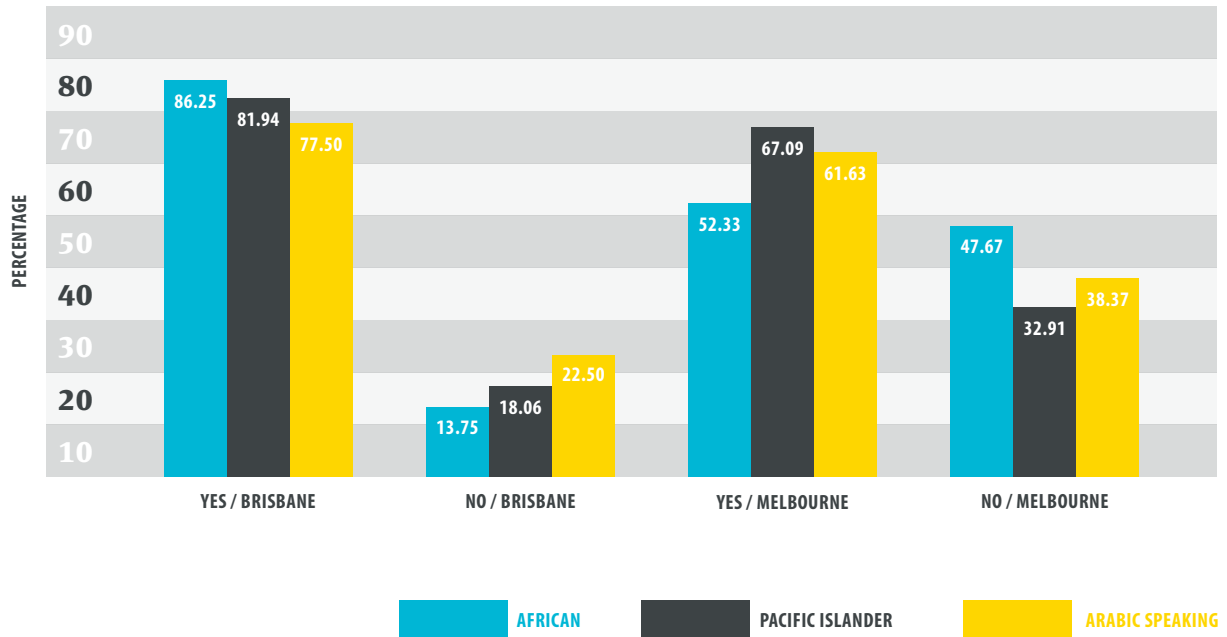
Responses were very consistent across all participant groups with 70% indicating 'Yes', while 24% indicated 'Don't Know' and only 5.6% saying 'No'.

Reponses to 'most of the people whom my parents or guardians spend free time with come from the same ethnic background as my parents' were also relatively consistent across the overall sample.

A majority of respondents perceived 'doing well at school' as the most important value or expectation of their families. 'Doing well at school' was by far the most cited answer and was consistent across all groups, with 86.5% of the overall sample indicating this as important to their families or guardians.

'Doing well at school' was followed by 'that I behave well', which was also consistent across all three groups, with 70.6% of the overall sample thinking this is important to their parents. 'That I am a good person' was next at 68.3%, followed by 'that I practice my faith' at 54.2%. Thus, though they did not seem to favour connecting with faith-based groups, practicing faith as an important value of their parents proved to be somewhat more important to Arabic speakers than to Pacific Islanders and Africans. While 'doing well at school' was relatively consistent among Brisbane and Melbourne youth, there was a notable difference in relation to 'behaving well' between the states. This particular quality was far more strongly emphasised among Queensland participants (see Figure 7 more details).

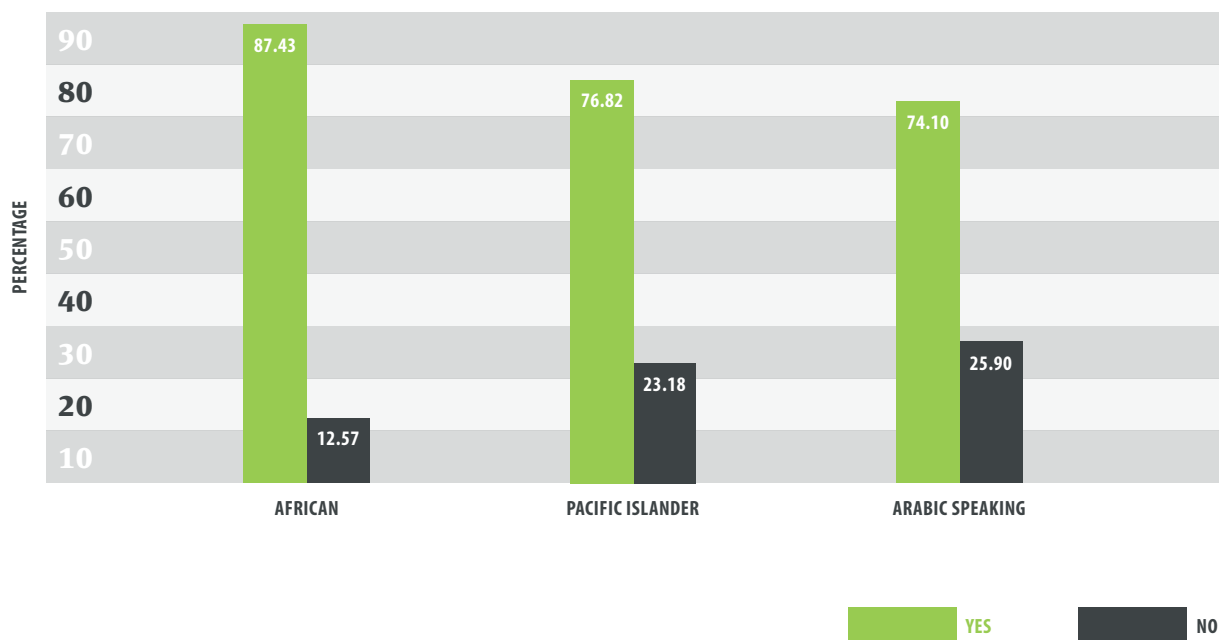
Figure 7: It is important to family or guardian that I behave well



### Personal Expectations and Personal Values

When respondents were asked about their own expectations, 'Doing well at school' was, again, identified as the most important (79.5% of the overall sample), and this was important especially among the African group. See Figure 8 for comparison among three groups.

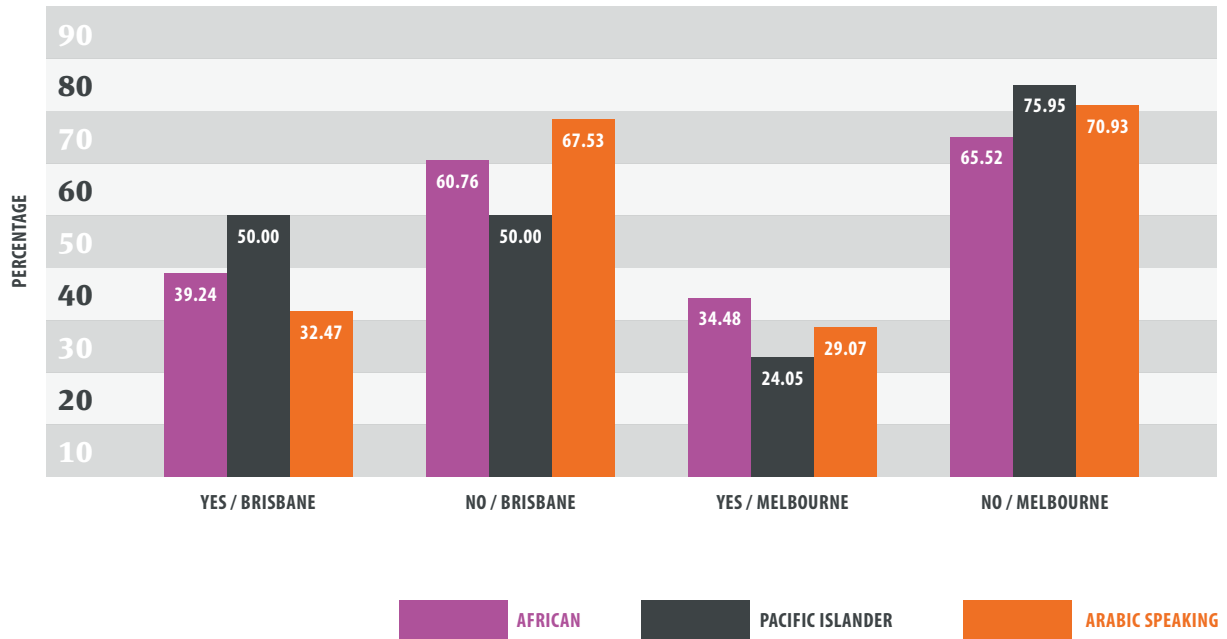
Figure 8: It is important to me that I do well in school



Participants also thought that 'being a good person' is very important with 70.5% choosing this option, followed by 'that I have a job' (66.7%) and 'that I behave well' (66.3%). 'To practice my faith' was important to 54.2% of the overall sample.

Getting involved in their community was comparatively less important (34.3%). However, among Pacific Islanders in Brisbane, community involvement was much more important than among Pacific Islanders in Melbourne. See Figure 9.

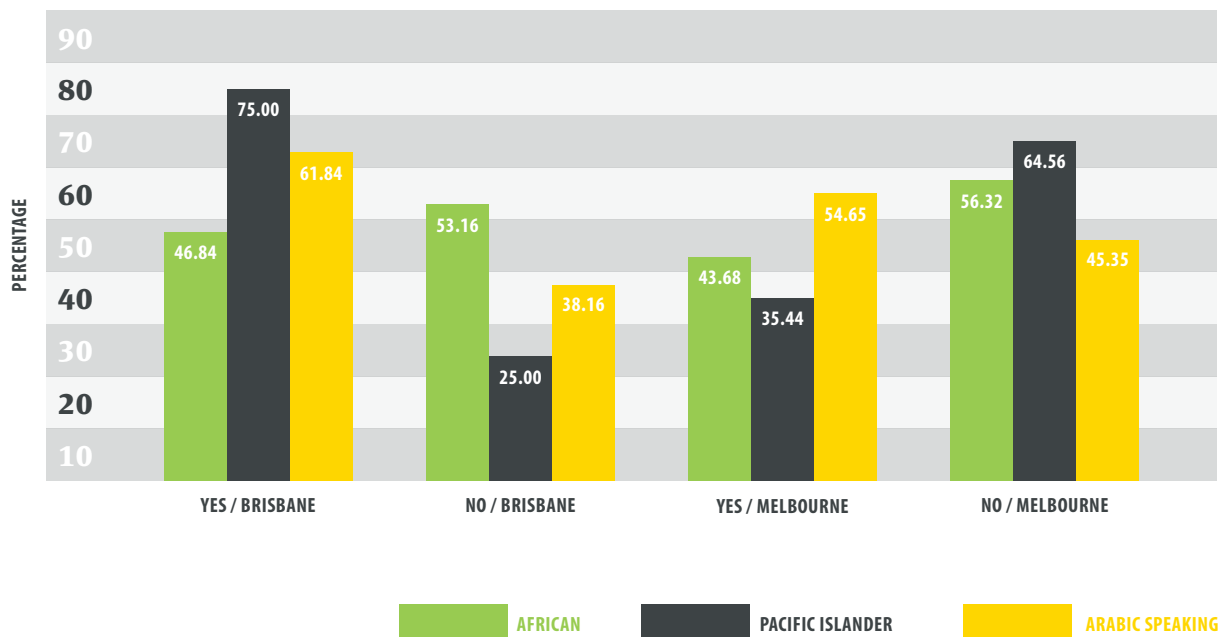
Figure 9: It is important to me that I get involved in the community



A similar difference appeared in the 'practice my faith' option, where significantly more Pacific Islanders in Brisbane

responded with 'Yes' compared with Melbourne, where the distribution of responses was basically reversed. See Figure 10.

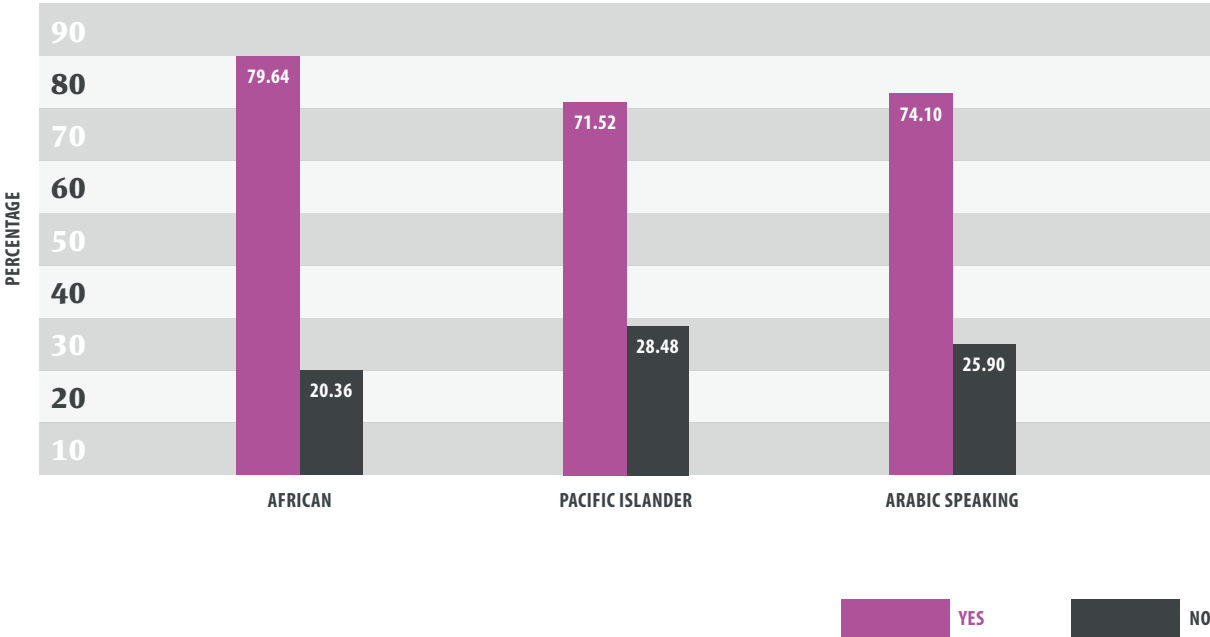
Figure 10: It is important to me that I practice my faith



Respondents were also asked about their perception of what they get out of connections with people (e.g. family, friends, neighbours, groups and associations). A big

proportion of the overall sample chose 'friendship' (75.2%). See Figure 11 for comparison between the groups.

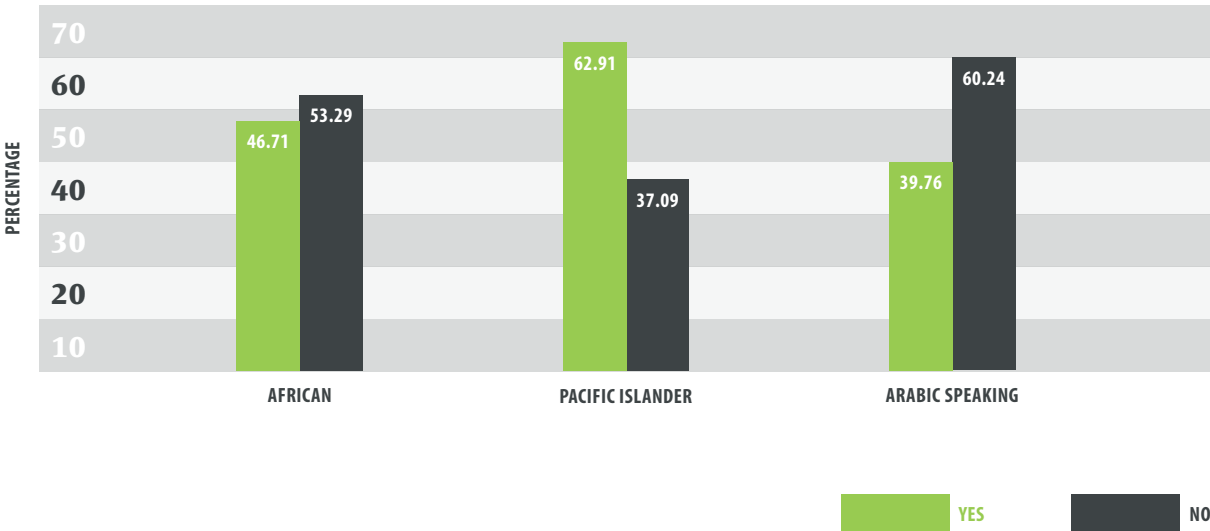
Figure 11: Having connections with people gives me friendship



Preference for having "friendship" as a result of connections with people was followed by the 'feeling of security' (68.2%), and 'meeting people with similar

interests and backgrounds' (49.4%). This latter theme was more important for Pacific Islanders than it was for other two groups as shown in Figure 12.

Figure 12: Having connections with people allows me to meet people with similar interests, backgrounds, etc.



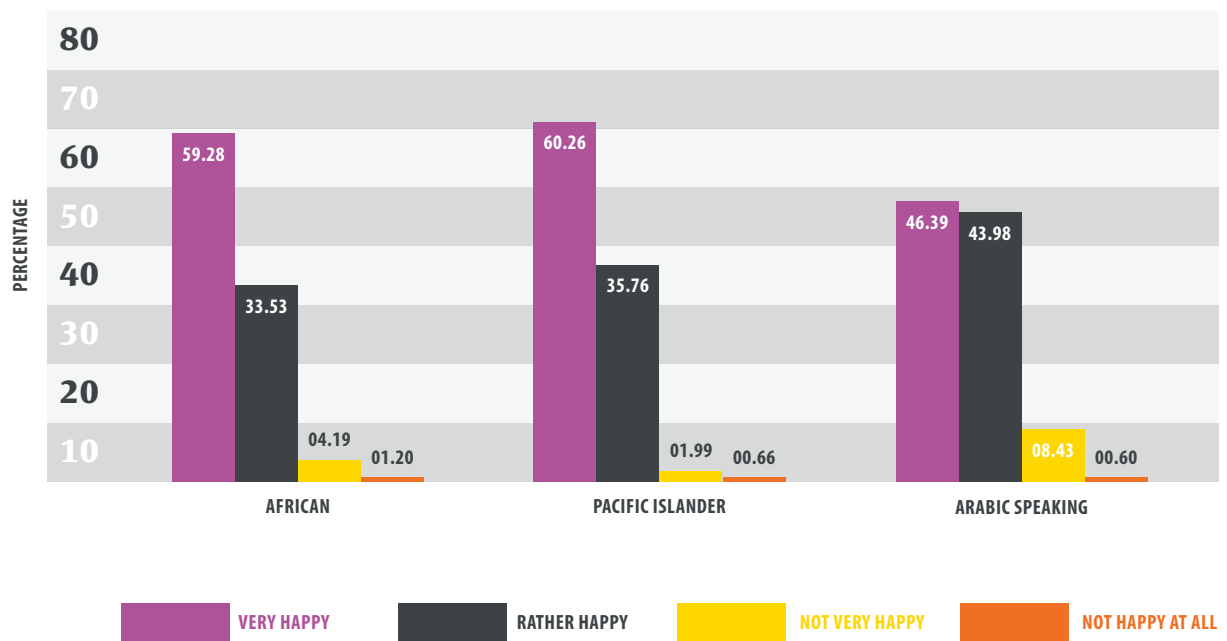


Respondents were also asked to answer the question: 'What do you consider to be the characteristics of a good young leader?' Most felt that the most valuable characteristic of a good leader is being 'respectful of others' (78.1%) followed by being a 'role model' (70.9%), being 'friendly' (69.2%) and 'inspiring' (68.8%). 'Raising youth issues' as a characteristic of a young leader was not seen as being as important (overall 48.6% thought so), particularly among African young people. Compared to Brisbane sample, migrant youth in Melbourne was less inclined to think that 'raising youth issues' was an important characteristic for a good leader. Also (in somewhat contradicting manner) young Africans also assigned less importance to a good young leader having a characteristic of being 'comfortable speaking in public or with elders/leaders' or 'having a firm opinion'.

## Happiness

Finally, the survey explored the levels of happiness among the respondents. A majority of participants in the surveys said they were either 'very happy' (55.2%) or 'rather happy' (37.8%). Only a small percentage of the overall sample declared they were 'not very happy' or 'not at all happy'. There were no big differences between the groups in the levels of happiness. The African group appeared to be the happiest, closely followed by the Pacific Islander group and the Arabic group. The highest level of happiness in Melbourne was displayed by the African group (70.2% answered 'very happy'), whereas in Brisbane those reporting feeling the happiest were Pacific Islanders (66.7%). See Figure 13 for more information.

Figure 13: Happiness levels by participant group



According to a recent Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) report (2013), Australia has been ranked the world's happiest nation among developed economies for the third year running. The OECD analysed its 34 member states (plus Brazil and Russia) across eleven categories in the Better Life Index, including topics such as housing, jobs, income, community, education, civic engagement, life satisfaction, work-life balance, safety, environment and health. Australia kept the top spot for the third year in a row ahead of Sweden and Canada. Top position went to Australia, because of the overall strength of its economy and higher living standards. In particular there is a strong sense of community

and high levels of civic participation in Australia, where 94 per cent of people believe they know someone they could rely on in time of need, higher than the OECD average of 90 per cent.

In general, the report found Australians are more satisfied with their lives than the OECD average, with 84 per cent of people saying they have more positive experiences in an average day (feelings of rest, pride in accomplishment, enjoyment, etc.) than negative ones (pain, worry, sadness, boredom, etc.). This figure is higher than the OECD average of 80 per cent (OECD 2013). The Survey indicates that migrant youth are active players in this overall positive picture.



# SECTION 4.

# NETWORK TRENDS

# NETWORK TRENDS

## Interconnectedness of Formal and Informal Networks

Issues of interconnected formal and informal networks in the social lives of our participants were explored in the interviews and focus groups. In general, the qualitative analysis revealed that the involvement of young people in social networks across the three groups is characterized by a strong degree of cross-pollination between their formal and informal social networks.

This interconnectedness was most apparent within the Pacific Island youth group. Interviewees consistently reported a blending of different networks, from formal to informal and vice versa. It should be noted that for most interviewees, while network involvement was expansive, network members were predominantly limited to other Pacific Islanders (or Tongans or Samoans, etc. depending on the specific network and context). We came across an interesting cross-cultural hip hop choir in Melbourne's West (Massive), in which a considerable number of Pacific Islanders were involved. The group is not limited to Pacific Islanders, but includes a range of young people whose 'sense of place' is an important element of their everyday lives and creative outlet.

*Participant: A large number of kids coming together and rehearse. It's a good example how some of our Pacific Island leaders have stepped up the market and motivating everyone. And it hasn't been a massive campaign or anything like that. It's just people knowing that it's the place to be and respecting each other.*

*Interviewer: What is the motivation?*

*Participant: It's based on music. It's just a group of kids who like being with each other and performing.*

*Interviewer: What do they gain from that?*

*Participant: Music, company, new people that they meet, it's not just their own culture, but it's other cultures and they bring their own styles... They promote respect for each other... (Pacific Islander focus group, Melbourne)*

Among the Pacific Islanders group parents or other relatives from the same family often cooperate in the formal networks with their children, thus adding another, informal layer to their involvement in formal networks. For instance, the case of cross-sectional initiative that interviewees reported on being involved in, called Pacific Pathways (Melbourne), presents a bridge between the formal and informal networks and brings out a dialogical character in young people's network involvement. The reasons for a blurring divide between formal and informal networks may also be found in a set of different traditions, habits, and culturally and/or religiously based practices. Moreover, blending of the roles of the community leaders (who may hold these roles formally or informally), religious leaders, family members and friends were also noticeable. Therefore, we can say that Pacific Islander case presents a distinctively rich material in terms of crossovers of formal and informal network activity for young people.

For African youth, the interconnectedness of networks was less prominent though still strongly noticeable. As mentioned, with the majority of African interviewees being relatively recent humanitarian arrivals, there was a strong dependence on service providers not only for practical settlement assistance, but also as a network building facilitation. Several interviewees noted that it was through their involvement through formal service providers, that informal (mainly friendship) networks were developed. As one young person explains:

*Most of us we either play sports, we are good at it. Then we get into it and then be friends from there. Or music, you do the music then make friends together. Like you can't just go talk because you don't speak the language. So you have sports and music first, then making friends. Without having talking. It's through doing. (African, Male, Brisbane)*

In an interview with a young African man who came in Australia without any members of his family and who spent the first seven months in an immigration detention, there was a noticeable transition from formal to informal type of networks even though these involved the same people. One of the interviewee's first contacts in Australia were people visiting immigration detention casually, but were at first still perceived more formal than informal. Later on, some of these visitors and volunteers became 'good friends'. In the

interview, he called this circle of people his 'family' as they helped him the most when settling in the new environment.

*They helped me to learn English coz I didn't know. Even like job or study, all that stuff. So I just got information from there- coz everything is new. Everything is new for me. The system is new, CentreLink, school, everything. Even crossing the road. Everything is so different (African, Male, Melbourne).*

For the Muslim sub-group within the broader Arabic-speaking youth group, interviewees in Melbourne tended to participate in the activities targeted for all Arabs, rather than for Muslims, as they explained:

*Participant 1: The activities that I wouldn't join are... the Islamic activities... Although it's my religion, but I just wouldn't join it. I would join Arab activities like ... anything to do with Arab, because it's general, it's all religions. But Muslim... I don't know what information they're going to give me. I wouldn't join a special religious activity, something to do with religion...*

*Participant 2: Islamic society unfortunately represents Muslims born in Australia, I don't feel like they represent me who came later... (Arabic-Speaking Focus Group, Melbourne)*

For participants in Brisbane, mosques served as central venues from which their involvement in the formal and informal networks primarily stemmed. For the Muslim group, there was only one mention of non-mosque related networks (this was University/Career related) and for the vast majority of interviewees, all networks (even if raising money for a nationwide initiative, e.g. the Cancer Council) were organized and facilitated through mosque-based networks. When describing his experience in charity, one interviewee explained:

*Participant: Both situations have been basically because I've been part of the Muslim community and been called upon to join, so I did. (Arabic-speaker, Male, Brisbane)*

Or, with regards to religious practices:

*Participant: Normally I come here twice a week because on Fridays I come for Qur'an and on Sundays I come for Arabic.*

*Then some people come on Saturdays and Fridays. Some people just come on Fridays (Arabic-speaker, Female, Brisbane)*

In Melbourne, activities that would be specifically or exclusively tied to religion generally did not get such a strong support among interviewees and focus group participants who identified with either Christian or Muslim religions. With the exception of one interviewee who was teaching in an Islamic Sunday school, religion did not play a significant role in their networking or network participation. This interviewee had a range of other activities, but the majority of these were not connected to religion. This does not mean, however, that religion was not important in the personal lives of participants. For those who did attend places of worship, their church or mosque attendance was a more personal initiative or else connected to their extended families:

*Participant: That's where I can see all me relatives, and the people that I know... And where I practice my culture. (Arabic-speaker, Male, Melbourne)*

In most cases, church attendance did not extend to youth groups or associations that would be specifically tied to religious organizations.

*Participant: Yeah my church has a youth group. I haven't really been involved in that too much because I don't have much time. Usually their things are on a Saturday or a Sunday. I work Saturday and Sunday so it's too hard for me. So I'll just go whenever they have something (Arabic-speaker, Female, Melbourne).*

## Network Change over Time

Network change over time was mostly reported by African youth. As mentioned before, the majority of African interviewees were relatively recent arrivals and had migrated via humanitarian visa (both UNHCR and family sponsorships). Additionally, the majority of interviewees had very limited knowledge of English upon arrival and, because of the difference in pre-migration and settlement context and protracted refugee camp situations, experienced significant settlement challenges. Consequently, much of their early network involvement

was limited to opportunities offered through service providers and family members (if applicable) and typically consisted of engagement with other African refugees:

*You only keep to the people you know. I'm like you African, I'm African, you know like we should have that connection. (African, Female, Brisbane)*

Indeed, qualitative analysis suggests a strong relationship between the duration of settlement and the types of formal and informal networks in which young Africans participated.

*Like when I first got here, it was just me with Dinka people. Then the longer I get here, the slower I move out. The longer you here, than the more relaxed you get. But when you get here, you only be with the people that you are new with. You tend to stick with the people that you have common grounds with. (African, Male, Brisbane)*

As illustrated in the prior excerpt, as the duration of respondents' settlement increased, with arguably concurrent improvements in English language and settlement navigation competency, the types of networks also undergo the transition. Along with these improvements, interviewees also reported an increased mobility by using public transport, which enabled them to participate in non-local as well as local networks. African young people reported gradual changes in the types of their networks. Many interviewees sustained engagement with earlier networks, including service provider networks.

## Cross-Cultural Engagement

Participants from all three communities expressed a clear desire for cross-cultural engagement, even if their current networks were predominantly ethno-specific. In the quantitative data interest in cross-cultural engagement was measured by asking participants if they liked being involved in activities happening outside of their family or ethnic group. Participants could choose responses 'Yes', 'No' or 'Sometimes'. Among Africans and Pacific Islanders the interest in cross-cultural engagement was highest, with 55.1% of Africans and 55.0% of Pacific Islanders saying 'Yes' and a further 37.1% of Africans and 38.4% of Pacific Islanders saying 'Sometimes' in

response to the statement: 'I like to be involved in activities happening outside of my family/ethnic group'. Among Arabic-speaking youth the interest was lower, with only 34.3% responding 'Yes' and additional 47.6% responding 'Sometimes'.

The level of interest of being involved in cross-cultural activities was affected by the length of residence in Australia, with the willingness to participate in cross-cultural activities increasing with time spent in Australia. Thus, overall 53.6% of newly arrived participants, 58.6% of those that had lived in Australia for 6-10 years and 60% of those that had lived in Australia for over 11 years indicated their desire to be involved in cross-cultural activities.

There were also some differences between males and females in this group: 57.3% of males and 53.6% of females in this group answered 'Yes' to the statement 'I like to be involved in activities outside of my family/ethnic group'. The females (10.7%) were also much more likely not wish to be involved in activities outside of their family/ethnic group than their male counterparts (3.7%). Further, this may be due to different gender roles within the community.

This is further explored in the qualitative data which shows that for African interviewees, participation in multicultural networks was linked to a sense of belonging within the Australian context, that is the more multicultural their networks, the more 'Australian' they felt. 'Making Australian friends' was reported as important for some of the interviewees, as this was part of the process of quicker acquisition of language and 'fitting in':

*The thing is, since I came to Australia I never spoke to a Sudanese or African. I don't have any Sudanese or African friends. I do [have] interest in that but I was focused on the language first because I don't know how to speak English at all 18 months ago - so that's the thing (...)Yeah, I'm just happy that all my friends are Australian. Even the guys that I live with (African, Male, 20, Melbourne)*

For Pacific Islander participants the desire for cross-cultural engagement was often a reaction against perceived homogeneity/insularity of the formal and informal networks





in which they engaged, which were overwhelmingly composed of other Pacific Island youth. Pacific Islander interviewees also appeared curious about the goings-on within different cultures. When asked about why they craved cross-cultural engagement, an interviewee noted:

*Getting exposure to each other's different backgrounds...you know, food, music, just knowing about each other's different cultural backgrounds (Pacific Islander, Male, Brisbane).*

One of the interviewees mentioned how the sole exposure to cultural diversity makes one appreciate it and 'become more multicultural.

*I think now looking back, if we had stayed in New Zealand, I think I would've only been hanging out with my kind of people – Pacific Islanders. Coz I grew up with them, coz I'd do everything with them, but we came here, and Melbourne being a multicultural city, I've learnt about different cultures, and gained understanding about them, and I think that's made me a better person. I've become more multicultural (Pacific Islander, Female, Melbourne).*

For the Arabic-speaking group, participation in cross-cultural networks appeared less urgent. However, interviewees did mention that cross-cultural engagement was perhaps a good way for others to learn about their culture, religion, etc. One interviewee suggested:

*I was thinking we could invite other religions to come and see each other, like for example invite churches to our mosque, like just to talk. (Male, Arabic Speaking focus group, Brisbane)*

Another example of this was raising money after the Brisbane floods as a show of support to the wider community to minimize or counter stereotypes and misconceptions.

Within the Melbourne sample, some interviewees appeared to participate in cross-cultural networks as a way to distance themselves for 'Muslim' or 'Arab' networks. For some interviewees in this group, participation in multicultural, non-religious affiliated networks was perceived as important.

## **Use of Social Media**

Generally speaking, Pacific Islander, African and Arabic-speaking groups reported use of computer technology, with Arabic-speakers demonstrating the most frequent use of social media and African respondents the least. Below, we discuss the varying uses of social media as a form of local, national and transnational networking.

Survey data on meeting new people showed that although social media, such as Facebook was used to varying extents by all three groups it did not represent an avenue to meet new people. Overall, only 33.1% of respondents indicated that they found it easy to meet people through social media whereas 66.7% said 'No'. Africans (73.1%) and Arabic speakers (68.7%) were more likely to say that social networking sites are not a particularly easy venue to meet people than Pacific Islanders (57.6%).

For Pacific Islander youth, use of social media was a way to communicate with friends and family in Australia and overseas. Because many Pacific Island youth spent their childhood and teenage years in New Zealand before moving to Australia, strong ties are maintained with their families and friends in New Zealand. Interviewees also used Skype for phoning their friends and families. Here is an illustrative excerpt from one of the interviews:

*Participant: I Skype people in Malaysia, Philippines, Samoa, America and New Zealand.*

*Interviewer: So why the Philippines and ...*

*Participant: Oh Philippines that's where some of my uncles and aunties live.*

*Interviewer: So this is extended family?*

*Participant: Yeah*

*Interviewer: So all these people, are they all extended family and friends?*

*Participant: Yeah. I've got a couple of friends that live in Malaysia. So yeah.*



*Interviewer: And how often would you do that?*

*Participant: Every Saturday and Sunday, coz we don't have internet Mondays to Fridays. Or TV.*

*Interviewer: So twice a week, on Saturdays and Sundays. So that involves email,*

*Participant: Skyping... Facebook*

*Interviewer: Facebook...*

*Participant: Bebo, MSN.*

*(Pacific Islander, Melbourne)*

Pacific Islander families placed a great deal of importance on maintaining familial and trans-community connections, therefore the use of social media for this group was high. In addition to transnational communication, Pacific Islander youth used social media (in particular Facebook) as a way to socialize with local peer groups. Given the extent of involvement of parents, aunts, uncles, etc. in daily life and the coordination of activities for youth, Facebook seems to provide a sense of autonomy and privacy for Pacific Islander youth and gives them a sense of 'closeness':

*Interviewer: What if you couldn't go on Facebook for some reason? How do you think that would make you feel? - maybe your internet broke down...*

*Participant: I dunno, like... you don't feel closer. Coz when you go on Facebook, you feel close.*

*Interviewer: Closer to your mates?*

*Participant: Yeah.*

*(Pacific Islander, Male, Melbourne)*

For African interviewees, use of social media was relatively low. This finding is linked to the high number of practical barriers reported by this group, specifically, issues around access

to the technology required (i.e. computer, fast internet connection) to participate in online networking. Additionally, as most participants were relatively new arrivals, computer competency was lower than for the other groups. Typically, online networks' members were limited to those living in close spatial proximity and who they also saw on a regular basis at school and in church. Given the pre-migration context (refugee camp, rural settings), young people were often unable to communicate with friends and family living in Africa, with the exception of contacts via landline phone calls. This disparity between communicating with 'Facebook' friends in Australia and those in Africa is illustrated below:

*We call them up and we talk to people from our country. If they live around Australia, we talk to them on Facebook and stuff. (African, Female, Brisbane)*

As with other networks for African participants, with increased time in Australia, improved English proficiency and practical information technology skill development, their participation in social media and online networking increased.

Findings indicate that Arabic-speaking interviewees had relatively sophisticated online networks and were generally quite 'internet savvy.' In general, interviewees in this group were using social media to keep in touch with their friends and extended family members in Australia and overseas, even though social media was used primarily to keep in touch with people who they also had face-to-face contact. Generally speaking, for this group, using social media was a major part of everyday life:

*I used to do karate and now I'm just on Facebook. I don't do anything anymore! I'd like to join a group but ... nothing. (Arabic-speaker, Female, Melbourne)*

Or

*Yeah, definitely, Facebook is a big thing for connecting with overseas, so I always use it. And we message each other or telephone, we call the house phone and talk to them and for special occasion. (Arabic-speaker, Female, Melbourne)*

One interviewee in Brisbane mentioned how an initial aim to connect with people overseas made her use Facebook to connect with people locally.

*Initially the reason I got Facebook was specifically to keep in touch with my family and friends overseas; just because you can see their pictures you know and what they get up to every day. So it's different to just talking to them on the phone. Then I had to add all my friends in Australia as well because they had Facebook. (Arabic-speaker, Female, Brisbane)*

Some young people in this group mentioned using social media to connect with friends and relatives overseas who they had never met in person. One young person explains:

*With the close family ones, yes, look at images, see how they are. We do voice chat sometimes, or webcam... we do things like that. But with the ones that I'm not actually close with*

*it's just talking to them. The purpose is, I don't know, to see who's out there. Are they alive? Do they look like us? Are they similar? Because the close close family my dad's actually lost contact with them because he's been here for so long. So some of them are my dad's cousins and their children are our age. So it's so interesting and some of them... but none of them live here. But if they did live here, we'd be seeing each other regularly I guess. (Arabic-speaker, female, Melbourne)*

For young people who settled in Australia more recently email or phone usage was more common in their communication with people overseas friends and relatives; but this transnational communication was less frequent. Otherwise social media was used primarily to communicate and relate to people whom the interviewees more or less interacted with frequently in real life, and to a lesser extent to maintain contact with extended family members overseas.

# SECTION 5.

# BELONGING &

# ENGAGEMENT

# BELONGING & ENGAGEMENT

The ways in which young people of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds develop and negotiate feelings of belonging has been examined across numerous contexts. Recent research reveals that for young people of migrant backgrounds, negotiating a sense of belonging is multifaceted and context-dependent. This has been explored in the context of inner-city youth (Butcher 2008), within the school setting (Willoughby 2007; Mansouri and Percival-Wood 2008) and within families, ethnic communities and between generations (Suarez-Orozco and Carhill 2008). In addition to exploring the contexts across which belonging is negotiated, research has emphasized the correlation between a sense of belonging and positive outcomes. For example, a study of young refugees in Melbourne revealed that a sense of belonging is critical for young people's health and wellbeing (Correa-Velez 2010). Acknowledging the importance of cultivating a sense of belonging, recent government policy positions 'belonging' as a cornerstone to their newly introduced Diversity and Social Cohesion Program (DIAC 2012a).

Building on this research, this section discusses the ways in which participants in this Project negotiated belonging within and across groups, how their feelings of belonging influenced the type of networks they felt they were able to join and those they actually participated in. Discussion in this section is limited to the intrinsic factors and internal processes that occur within the participants' community. Participants reported numerous reasons for engagement in formal and informal networks. There were, however, several themes which emerged from their responses. Perhaps most striking was the complexity around negotiation of individual and family/community networks and the impact of context-specific feelings of belonging.

## Negotiating Belonging Within and Across Groups

In the Pacific Island group, engagement in networks was closely tied to young people's feelings of belonging within and beyond their own ethnic group. At various times, interviewees cited both desires for outward engagement (with others of non-Pacific Island backgrounds) and engagement with those from shared cultural backgrounds as a means to foster feelings of belonging across contexts:

*It's that sense of belonging makes you want to go back to those groups and form those groups. Everyone has that sort of intrinsic feeling to belong to a group of people that are there to support you and to go through life with you and the challenges and to help you out. (Pacific Islander, Female, 18, Brisbane)*

Additionally, in the quantitative analysis, findings indicate that meeting people with similar interests and backgrounds was a desirable outcome of network involvement for 62.9% of Pacific Island young people. Likewise, making friends (71.5%) and having someone to rely on (49%) was perceived as a beneficial outcome of network involvement. These elements of belonging were more keenly felt among the male participants across all three groups.

For the African group, the impact of network engagement on a sense of belonging was multi-dimensional and shaped by the network member composition. Interviews reveal that some young people embraced/accepted associations with other Africans while others rejected them entirely. Thematic analysis indicates that these conflicting feelings were tied to fluctuating perceptions of intra- and inter-group belonging, specifically notions of being 'Australian' and the 'Australian way of life'.

As most African interviewees were relatively recent arrivals, networks were often composed of other refugees from similar backgrounds. These highly homogenous networks appeared to foster a strong sense of intra-group, ethnic belonging amongst interviewees:

*When I hear them speaking Lugandan I get a big smile, like 'oh my God, someone like me.' It feels so good (African, Female, Brisbane).*

For those interviewees who participated in more ethnically or culturally diverse networks, the sense of belonging which they fostered was linked with notions of being Australian. That is, the more diverse their networks were, the more 'happy' or 'lucky' they perceived themselves to be. One participant explained:

*For me if I'm with my country people I don't feel very good or happy because we speak the same language but if I'm with other people...people that come from*

*different country, I feel good, happy to be with them...I'm not really good when I'm with my own people. I can't be really happy (African, Female, 16, Melbourne).*

Another participant said:

*I feel like I've been really lucky. Coz when I speak with a lot of people who come to Australia, the African guys, some of them they born here and they like, yeah, 20-19 (years old), and I meet them in the club and we just talk. They say they don't have white friends. That shocks me. I'm really lucky... Some of them say that they're just in the high rises or whatever and they do their own things. And when they see that all my friends are all white, they say to me 'how you go with that?' 'were you born here?' 'did you go to high school here?' and I say 'no, I been here for 15 months or something like that (Male, 20, Melbourne).*

Similarly, the quantitative data showed that making friends (79.6%) and meeting people with similar interests and backgrounds (46.7%) was a valuable outcome of network involvement for African participants. The 15-17 year olds in this group were more likely to feel that these two things were important. That is 84.3% of 15-17 year olds and 75.8% of those that were 18 and over said that making friends was a valuable outcome of network involvement. Furthermore, 47.1% of 15-17 year olds and 45.3% of those that were 18 and over said they met people as a result of their networks. 83.3% of females and 75.9% of males said that making friends was a valuable outcome of network involvement, with females (48.8%) being more likely to meet similar people through their networks than males (44.6%).

Like African and Pacific Island interviewees, the Arabic-speaking group also experienced context specific types and levels of belonging. Within the Melbourne sample, Australian born interviewees or those with longer settlement duration were typically more engaged across groups and experienced a degree of belonging both within and beyond their ethnic communities. For the recent arrivals and younger Arabic-speaking interviewees, engagement in family- or ethno-specific networks appeared to be the context in which their belonging was sought and cultivated. One participant said she felt understood more within her cultural group:

*Because it effects because they are from the same culture, so my family, and some of my friends- so they understand me more (Arabic-speaker, Female, 16, Melbourne).*

Another respondent described her bond with her family:

*Yeah, like, I feel like they like me [family], I like to always be with them. Yeah, like I belong to somewhere (Arabic-speaker, Male, 16, Melbourne).*

Young Arabic-speaking background participants from all sub-groups negotiated their sense of belonging across multiple places, nations and cultures on a daily basis. Their choice of identities and ways of negotiating differed across different contexts. Sometimes they felt a sense of entitlement to their multicultural or hybrid selves and expressed support for heterogeneous, multicultural Australia. At other times, sense of belonging was closely tied to one element or aspect of their identity.

Among the Muslim interviewees in Brisbane, formal and informal networks centred almost exclusively on the mosque. As such, the belonging which network participation fostered was tied to being a Muslim. Across all sub-groups amongst the Arabic-speaking interviewees, there was a strong sense that negotiating Australian belonging or identity for the Muslims, Arabs, and Middle Easterners was a daily task and one which was informed by yet also changed according to socio-cultural contexts.

It is also apparent that belonging within and across different networks was impacted by gender, religious affiliation and time lived in Australia. In the quantitative data, 47.6% of Arabic-speaking participants said that they had someone to rely on as a result of their network involvement. This increased with the length of residency in Australia. 42.4% of those that were newly arrived, 44% of those that had lived in Australia for 6-10 years, 52.4% of those that had lived in Australia for 11 or more years and 51.2% of those that were born in Australia had someone to rely on as a result of their networks. Also, making friends was an important outcome of network engagement for 74.1% of Arabic-speaking participants. Those aged 15-17 (81.5%) expressed this more often than those aged 18 and over (69.3%). Females (77%) were more likely to have made friends through their networks than males (70.9%).



## Feelings of Belonging and Network Choices

Quantitative data showed that there were many contexts in which young people felt that they did not belong and this had some impact on the networks they participated in. School-based groups, ethnic community groups, recreational groups, religious groups and volunteer groups were among the many networks that young people were involved in. As illustrated above (refer to Section 2.3 Types of Social Networks) the data show that 43% of survey participants in the overall sample were involved in school-based groups in the past year.

Compared to all the other places/social grouping/institutions listed as options in the survey (ethnic community, recreational, religious, volunteer group and 'other'), school represented the site where youth were most likely to feel a lack of belonging (18.8% of respondents said that sometimes they feel they do not belong at school). These feelings were relatively consistent across all three participant groups. Arabic-speaking (21.1%) youth were only slightly more likely to express they did not belong at school than African youth (18.0%) and Pacific Islander respondents (17.2%). Additionally, in regards to the school-based groups, we received consistent responses from all participant groups that suggest that the majority of youth are not actively participating in such groups. Slightly more active participation was observed among Africans (44.3%) and Arabic-speaking youth (44.2%) compared to 40.4% of Pacific Island young people.

In relation to the statement 'Sometimes, I do not feel like I belong with my family', 12% of African respondents, 9.3% of Pacific Island respondents and 10.8% of Arabic speaking respondents agreed with it. A further 17.6% of participants said that sometimes they feel that they do not belong in their neighbourhood. African and Arabic-speaking youth were more inclined to indicate that sometimes they feel alienated from their neighbourhood - 21.6% of African youth and 20.5% of Arabic speakers. Only 9.9% of Arabic speakers said that sometimes they feel they do not belong in their neighbourhood. This correlated with a very low interest in participating in the ethnic community groups for the overall sample, with only 34.9% responding that they had been active in such a group in the past year. This is

particularly the case for Pacific Island and Arabic-speaking respondents. Only 22.9% Arabic-speaking respondents and 28.5% Pacific Island young people were involved in such groups in the past year. In contrast to this, a majority of African respondents (52.7%) confirmed that they were involved in an ethnic community group in the past year.

On average, 17.6% of all respondents indicated that sometimes they feel like they do not belong in Australia. African and Arabic-speaking youth were more inclined to feel this way: i.e. nearly a quarter (22.4%) of Arabic-speakers, 19.2% of Africans, and 10.6% of Pacific Islanders.

Few participants engaged in recreational groups and volunteer groups, even though the numbers of involvement in volunteer groups were higher in our sample than explicated in the national statistics (ABS 2010). A minority of respondents have been involved in recreational groups (e.g., sports, arts, and dance) in the past year. There was a similar level of involvement in such groups among Pacific Island (45.7%) and African respondents (42.5%). Involvement in recreational groups was significantly low among the Arabic speakers with only 30.7% indicating involvement. Participation in a volunteer group was limited to a total of 36.8% of all respondents. This result was consistent across all three participant groups: 36% of African participants, 33% Pacific Islander youth and 40.4% of Arabic speakers confirmed that they were involved in the volunteer group. These results are further analysed in Section 7 of the report.

Overall, youth from our sample were most active in religious groups compared to other kinds of groups in the past year, though even this involvement amounted to only 44.4% in total. In saying this, the margins between involvements in different types of groups are very slight (for example, the next most common are school based groups, in which 43% of respondents are involved). Thus, 54.5% African and 52.3% of Pacific Island respondents were involved in religious groups in the past year. Arabic-speaking youth in our sample were significantly less active in religious groups in the past year – only 27.1% of this group participated in a religious group. Such a finding begs further examination of young people's attitudes towards religion and the wider socio-political context in which they are situated.

## Feelings of Belonging and Network Participation

When it comes for a sense of belonging for Pacific Island interviewees, there is a distinction between inter- and intra- cultural group participation and a sense of belonging was clearly dependent on a group and context. For the majority of interviewees, being around people of the same backgrounds provided a sense of comfort, support and belonging. As one interviewee expressed it:

*I guess it's a sense of belonging, friendship and just being able to be who I am. (Pacific Islander, Female, 15, Brisbane)*

The responses with regards to impact of inter-group network engagement were more mixed. Several interviewees managed to seamlessly engage in, and 'belong' to, a diverse array of groups while others felt various degrees of anxiety in moving between these two realms:

*Like at school or university, there's usually like cliques sort of, so it's a group which is already formed and they have their own identity and it's very difficult to break that if you're culturally different you. (Pacific Islander, Female, 18, Brisbane)*

Similarly, the quantitative data show that 72.8% of Pacific Island participants felt that security, community and support were a valuable outcome of their network involvement. The qualitative responses suggest the complexity of navigating various contexts for Pacific Island young people and the impact on their sense of belonging both within and beyond their cultural group. This is illustrated in young people's experiences of cultural representation across various contexts with several interviewees adjusting cultural representation in preparation/response to perceived norms across Pacific Island and non-Pacific Island groups.

African interviewees participated in a variety of formal and informal networks that promoted their sense of belonging. Reasons for engagement in formal and informal networks reported by African interviewees included:

- Accessing services (to meet practical needs and meet people);
- Seeking comfort;
- Participating in specific activities (i.e. Sports); and
- Engaging with community issues.

For newly arrived interviewees network participation was often initiated through accessing settlement services which facilitated further formal and informal networks. Ability and need to access services was partly determined by specific migration pathways and visa types (e.g. UNHCR versus family sponsorship). In the quantitative data, 46.1% of African participants indicated that a major outcome of their network involvement was getting help to get things done. This response decreased the longer the duration of settlement became for participants, so that 51.8% of newly arrived participants, 43.1% of those that had lived in Australia for 6-10 years, and only 26.7% of those that had lived in Australia for 11 or more years felt this way.

Interviewees also described engagement in ethno-specific networks as a way to seek comfort in uncertain times, feel connectedness and belonging with those from similar backgrounds. These networks also brought a sense of familiarity.

*We are from the same country, we speak our own language. I feel comfortable hanging with them (African, Female, 17, Brisbane).*

Or

*I get to participate in things that I would participate in back at home. Which is good (African, Male, 19, Melbourne).*

This was consistent with the quantitative data, which showed that 68.9% of African respondents gained a feeling of security, community and support from their network involvement. This was most common among females (73.3% as opposed to 63.9% of males), those aged 18 and over (70.5% as opposed to 65.7% of 15-17 year olds) and the newly arrived (70%, as opposed to 66.7% of those that had lived in Australia for 11 or more years).

Other interviewees engaged in networks as a means of participating in a specific activity, particularly sports-based. When confronted with network barriers (i.e. language), several interviewees perceived sport as a way to make friends in the face of adversities:

*Most of us, we play sports because we're good at it. Then we get into it and then be friends from there. Or music, you do the music and then make friends together. Like you can't just go talk because you don't speak the language. So you have sports and music first, then making friends. Without talking. It's through doing. (African, Male, Brisbane)*

Arabic-speaking participants were generally highly active in formal and informal activities, but their reasons for engagement varied. For this group of interviewees, first and foremost, family and 'community' played a significant role in informing their network engagement. People from Muslim backgrounds display different reasons for network engagement compared with young people of Christian backgrounds. Muslim interviewees chose to engage predominantly with other young Muslims. Additionally alignment of values and morals of networks members was a frequently cited reason for network engagement amongst the Muslim subgroup:

*A lot of people say that culture doesn't make a person, it's [sic] culture that does make a person. I'm not picking out anything. I'm not a racist or anything, but I'm saying I wouldn't join anything that has - if I know that they have basically bad morals from their background or whatever; I won't join. (Arab-speaker, Male, 21, Brisbane)*

Within the Melbourne cohort, several interviewees referred to making conscious efforts to engage in a wide range of both inter- and intra- ethnic formal and informal networks. This group reported higher levels of agency in their network choices, though still experienced influence from family and religious communities. In Melbourne, females in particular who have lived in Australia for relatively long periods of time felt that their cultural and/or linguistic background is an important element of their network involvement, interests and choices in study, volunteering or professional life.

*My continued interest, like my interest in those issues has not waned over the years so I'm still... so I still take an interest in issues effecting CALD communities. Particularly the Arab community because I'm so aware of the issues that they face, not just in Australia but overseas as well (Arab-speaker, Female, 25, Melbourne).*

In the quantitative data, a total of 63.3% of participants reported gaining a feeling of security, community and support from their networks. Age differences were somewhat pronounced, within the 'older' group of 18 and over more people (67.3%) felt they were gaining a feeling of security, community and support from their networks compared to somewhat lower number (56.9%) within the younger group of 15-17 year olds. Males (65.8%) were more likely to feel this way than females (60.9%). Further, 62.6% of Muslims and 66.7% of Christian Arab speakers felt they were gaining support through their networks. Arabic-speaking interviewees also reported high levels of involvement in organized charity and volunteer work, particularly in Brisbane.

**SECTION 6.**  
**SOCIAL BARRIERS**  
**TO NETWORK**  
**ENGAGEMENT**

# SOCIAL BARRIERS TO NETWORK ENGAGEMENT

Several barriers to cross-cultural engagement were reported by the Pacific Island, African and Arabic-speaking participants. Participants were asked to mark all that apply from a list of nine options that included:

- Being too busy
- Not knowing about social events
- Having difficulty meeting people
- Not having transport
- Family wants me to stay at home
- Language problems
- Don't feel like I belong
- Do not want to be more involved
- Other

A relatively small number of respondents indicated 'Having difficulty meeting people' as a reason for not participating in activities: 10.2% of Africans, 4.6% of Pacific Island young people and 4.8% of Arabic-speakers. Very few participants listed 'Don't feel like I belong' as a reason for not participating in activities. This relatively

low number was consistent across all three groups: 5.4% of Africans; 7.3% of Pacific Island and 9.7% of Arabic speakers. Among the Arabic-speaking participants, 12.3% of Muslims and only 3.7% of Christians found this to be a barrier.

The majority of participants were well informed about upcoming activities and events in the communities. Overall only 17.6% reported not knowing about social events. Within the three groups, 22.9% of Africans, 20.5% of the Pacific Island group and only 9.7% of Arabic speakers listed 'Not knowing about social events' as a barrier. There were some significant distinctions under this category. For example, among the African group lack of knowledge about social events was seen as a barrier to cross-cultural engagement mostly among those who were newly arrived. That is, 33.3% of those that had been in Australia for 5 years or less found this to be a problem, whereas only 15.3% of those that had lived in Australia 6-10 years and 6.7% of those that had been in Australia for 11 or more years had lack of knowledge about social events. Also, among the Arabic-speaking participants, only 8.5% of Muslims and 13% of Christians reported a lack of knowledge of social events.

*Table 7. 'Main things that keep me from getting involved'*

	AFRICAN YOUTH	PACIFIC ISLANDER	ARABIC SPEAKERS
BEING TOO BUSY	38.0%	33.1%	37.0%
NOT KNOWING ABOUT SOCIAL EVENTS	22.9%	20.5%	9.7%
HAVING DIFFICULTY MEETING PEOPLE	10.2%	4.6%	4.8%
NOT HAVING TRANSPORT	18.1%	17.9%	7.9%
FAMILY WANTS ME TO STAY AT HOME	13.9%	13.2%	10.9%
LANGUAGE PROBLEMS	13.9%	1.3%	7.3%
DON'T FEEL LIKE I BELONG	5.4%	7.3%	9.7%
DO NOT WANT TO BE MORE INVOLVED	6.0%	6.0%	13.9%



The variance in response illustrates that reasons for engagement (or barriers to engagement) are both group- and context-specific.

## Experiences of Racism and Exclusion

Findings from this research indicate that the impact of racism and discrimination on the lives of migrant and refugee young people is significant. This is consistent with the findings from a study by Mansouri and colleagues (2009) which revealed that over 80% of non-Anglo research participants experienced some form of racism in Australia. This research also found that, similar to findings presented herein, experiences of racism and discrimination had a negative impact on young people's health and well-being, particularly for young women. Australian Government reports support these conclusions, illustrating how racism and discrimination contribute to social and economic disadvantages (Agenda for Racial Equality 2012).

In addition to explicit incidences of racism, this research highlights the impact of broader negative public discourses concerning immigration, asylum seekers, etc. for young people of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. This impact is well established with recent reports (e.g. the Scanlon Foundation's Mapping Social Cohesion 2011) illustrating the prevalence of perpetuating negative attitudes towards immigrants in the media driven public discourse. According to the Mapping Social Cohesion Report (2011), many Australians continue to be unsupportive of the current immigration intake. The highest point was in 2010, when 37-47% of respondents claimed that they felt immigration intake was 'too high.' Likewise, certain groups appear to bear the brunt of negative attitudes, with 24% of respondents claiming that they 'felt negatively' about people from Iraq, 24% about people from Lebanon and 43% about Muslims. This rhetoric of a lack of acceptance manifests itself in several ways, notably through popular media outlets. Several researchers have examined the implications of exposure to the negative media portrayal of certain ethno-cultural groups. They revealed that the negative media portrayal of people of migrant and refugee background has significant impact on Australians (see Dunn et al. 2007; Jakubowicz 1994; Poynting and Mason 2007; Windle 2008; Mansouri et al. 2009).

This section discusses the experiences of racism, both explicit and implicit, among the participants in the African, Pacific Island and Arabic-speaking groups. It also explores the effect it has on their willingness to participate in certain networks and their levels of trust toward certain groups. Participants in all three groups had a number of experiences that caused them to disengage or exclude themselves from certain networks. They described their internal dialogue about what they thought they could join and what they wanted to join as a result of negative external factors.

Interviewees from all three groups reported a range of 'exclusionary practices' ranging from explicit, targeted racism to more implicit or covert discrimination or exclusion. Among African youth, analysis of data indicated that interviewees in Brisbane reported more frequent experiences of direct and targeted racism compared to those in Melbourne.

In both samples, verbal assault most often occurred while using public transport or while occupying public spaces (often in groups with other Africans). Young people reported being told to 'go home' or 'sickness comes from Africa' among other slurs. It also appeared that incidents or the threats of racism were exacerbated for young people from the asylum-seeking backgrounds:

*Oh my god, that was really difficult...Because to be honest, even though I was the one who was more scared instead of they were scared. Because I thought 'I'm black' and they're going to-because in Sudan you had the Arab people and they're white, and I thought they were the same people (in Australia). So every time I see any white person I just run to the bathroom and hide myself. (African, Female, 17, Brisbane)*

For other interviewees, perceptions of being different/ being a visible minority indirectly hindered or prevented participation in certain networks. Participants had preconceived ideas of how other people would react to them and as such entered certain contexts feeling like they would not succeed in forming a network. One participant said:

*I feel like any time I want to get a job in a retail job and I walk in... it's really... I dunno. Maybe it's my colour (African, Male, 19, Melbourne).*

There were also a number of other instances where self-exclusion was evident. These practices were not necessarily linked to external pressures, but rather to an anxiety around how they might be perceived from certain groups (informed by earlier negative experiences). As a result participants felt more comfortable with people who were of the same or similar background to them. This is exemplified in the following quote:

*Yeah. If I feel like I go to an area that's like, I dunno, full of white people or full of other races besides mine, I feel very awkward. I don't feel comfortable going through the shopping centres or the streets or anything alone without someone from my ethnicity or cultural background. (African, Male, 19, Melbourne)*

Several interviewees also discussed a particular form of pre-emptive discrimination from within the African community. It was noted that some parents often discouraged their children from socialising with fellow Africans due to fears that many young African people have displayed problematic behaviour and this would, in turn, negatively impact their children. This leads to examples of self-exclusion:

*To be honest, my father never lets me hang out with black people like the Sudanese because he knows they're bad and he's been through it. (African, Female, 17, Brisbane)*

It was, however, not always the parents who discouraged this kind of interaction; other young people made this choice on their own terms. In explaining their decision to not associate with fellow Sudanese, young people said the following:

*I like to be by myself. I don't like to go to these people who know me and stuff. You know African people, they talk, they talk, they talk too much. (Male, 18, Melbourne)*

Or

*For some reason they [other Africans in Australia] feel that everyone's against them or something like that. I haven't had this feeling... I feel the opposite. I think it's more about how you treat people. For them though, everything is dark and everything is against us. And*

*we just do our own thing. We don't do anything with them and stuff like that. (Male, 20, Melbourne)*

Similar to the experiences of racism reported by African interviews, 'external pressures' for Arabic-speaking interviewees ranged from explicit incidences of racism to more discrete discrimination practices and general negative public discourse. Again, it is noteworthy that Brisbane-based interviewees reported higher incidences of racism and discrimination. The role of religion was evident here, as the majority of Brisbane participants were Muslim and the majority of Melbourne participants were Christian. The participants themselves felt that religion played an important part in the way they were treated:

*I don't have too much negative... I mean it's been getting better here but I know in Australia it was a bit controversial to be Lebanese ... but mainly Muslim, but I'm Catholic so it hasn't bothered me too much. But there is always that thing, oh, 'you're Lebanese' but I haven't had too much trouble in my life, everyone's been pretty good. I have a lot of friends with different nationalities, Italian, Greek, Indian... any nationality, so I haven't had much trouble, I think it's been good. (Arab-speaker, Female, 22, Melbourne)*

Specific incidences of racism and discrimination mostly involved being singled out in a group based on appearance, ethnicity and/or religion, and most perpetrators linking individuals with 'terrorists'. Several interviewees relayed experiences of being verbally attacked in public places and in schools, while others described a more general climate of intolerance and ignorance:

*There are a lot of racial issues going on. It's a stereotype thing basically... some people look at us like terrorists or something like that. (Male, Arabic Speaking focus group, Brisbane)*

Or

*Nothing direct, like name calling or group labelling, nothing direct. But there was always that feeling that*

*there was prejudice and a bit of, I don't know, yeah, you never felt - I never felt accepted with that guy. There was always something different between me and the other players in the team. (Male, Arabic speaker, Brisbane)*

Or

*I think it's harder for girls wearing Hijab. I find it with mum, like whenever we go shopping people assume that she is somehow dumber or deaf...that's rude, offensive. (Female, Arabic speaking focus group, Melbourne)*

The impact of racism and discrimination on interviewees' network engagement varied considerably. For those who felt that racism or discrimination impacted network access, the reasons behind this impact were linked to negative public perceptions or anticipated reactions rather than to blatant exclusion. Although, this 'anticipatory exclusion' was a common experience for all interviewees, it was again more common among the Brisbane sample:

*I'll give you an example - the Neighbourhood Watch. Could you imagine you arrive at a Neighbourhood Watch and you're the only olive complexion or dark complexion, dark hair, dark eyes, with the old rickety car compared to the older generation who speak 100 per cent perfect English and they've been there at that Neighbourhood Watch together for the last 20 years? There are those boundaries there, you feel like you're different... also culture as in, they're not like me, they're different to me. They don't have the same views as me, they'll reject everything I say (Arabic-speaker, Male, 21, Brisbane).*

Of the three groups, Pacific Island interviewees reported the fewest incidences of racism and discrimination. However, several interviewees reported having interacted with people or networks which held stereotypes about Pacific Island young people which subsequently impacted their ability or desire to engage with these people or networks. This position was expressed more emphatically by the male interviewees in Melbourne:

*People will see you and they will know that you are like a Polynesian background and they will think, like, you're not a friendly guy and they will think you are a bully. And sometime people will start like...making not rumours, but they will start like....hold off on you and not approach you instead of being friendly. (Male, Pacific Island Focus Group, Melbourne)*

Or

*I think they (non-Pacific Island) just get the picture when they see us play rugby, because it is a physical sport, like they think that we are gonna be like that when we are doing homework or something. (Male, Melbourne)*

It is likely that these perceptions compounded existing barriers to accessing and participating in certain formal and informal networks.

*Interviewer: Does that [peers perceiving you negatively] worry you?*

*Participant: In a way... coz like if I'm trying to make new friends... then I dunno if they think I'm gonna try to scare them or trying to be friends with them... (Pacific Islander, Male, Melbourne)*

## Trust

Trust is a key empirical feature of the social capital literature (Bourdieu 1986; Coleman 1988; Putnam 1993), which argues that trust is vital to feelings of belonging and connectedness (Tilly 2005; 2007). Participants were asked if they would, generally speaking, say that most people can be trusted or if they thought that they couldn't trust anyone. There were three possible answers to the question about whether people can be trusted:

- Yes, people can be trusted
- No, can't trust anyone
- Don't know

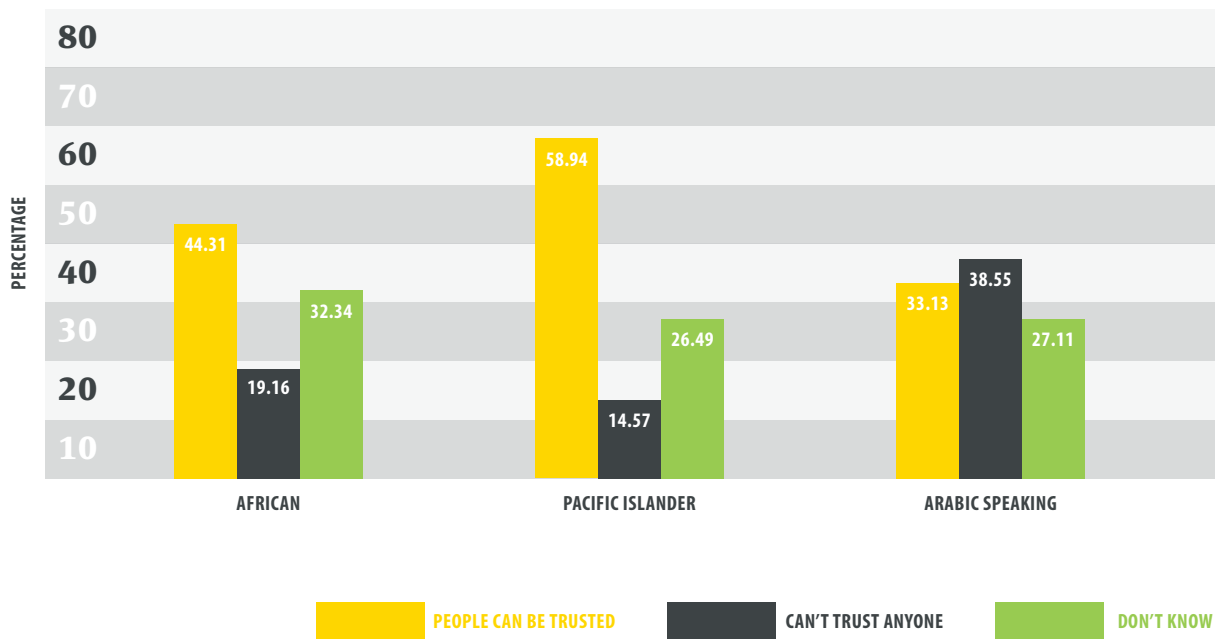
Overall, 45.0% of the sample indicated that 'people can be trusted'. Nearly a quarter of the overall sample

(24.4%) said that they 'can't trust anyone' while just over a quarter (28.7%) answered 'Don't Know'.

Among all three participant groups, Pacific Islander youth displayed the greatest levels of trust in people: 58.9% of this group said that 'people can be trusted', while only 14.6% said that they 'can't trust anyone'. African respondents were

also more likely to respond 'People can be trusted' (44.3%), though to a lesser degree, while 19.2% of African youth said that they 'can't trust anyone'. An opposite sentiment can be observed in the responses of the Arabic-speaking youth, where more people (38.6%) responded that they 'can't trust anyone'. A third of Arabic speakers (33.1%) said that 'people can be trusted'. See Figure 14 for visual demonstration.

Figure 14: Levels of trust in people



The importance of trust within the Pacific Island group was exemplified by one participant who said:

*I guess it's the trust factor. As you grow older you seem to learn that trust is a valuable thing and once it's placed in the right people's hands it's invaluable. (Pacific Islander, Male, 22, Brisbane)*

Participants were then asked to what degree they trust certain groups. They were given the options of choosing 'completely', 'somewhat', 'not very much' or 'not at all'. There were ten groups listed:

- Family
- Relatives
- People in your local area
- People you meet for the first time
- People from another country
- People from another religion
- Politicians
- Police and law enforcement

- Teachers
- Service Providers – Multicultural, refugee, migrant centres, translation services, welfare agencies etc.

Overall, respondents indicated that they trust their family the most, with 78.1% of the entire sample marking 'completely'. Among the three groups, 78.4% of African, 84.1% of Pacific Island youth and 72.3% of Arabic speaking youth indicated that they trusted completely their family. A significant overall finding, however, is that the trust in family does not spill over to the trust in relatives. Pacific Island young people tended to trust their relatives the most, with 56.3% indicating 'completely'. For the African and Arabic-speaking respondents, however, 'somewhat' was the most common response. Among African youth, 44.3% of responded 'somewhat', 38.9% responded 'completely' and 12.0% responded 'not very much'. The Arabic-speaking group displayed the lowest levels of trust in relatives: 47.6% of this group responded 'somewhat', 25.9% responded 'completely', 17.9% responded 'Not very much', while 6.6% responded 'Not at all'.





Respondents indicated that of all the groups suggested, they are least likely to trust people they meet for the first time and politicians. Of the total sample, 36.8% indicated trusting 'at all', 35.8% indicated trusting 'somewhat' and less than 3% of respondents indicated trusting 'completely'.

There were two significant spikes in 'not at all' responses from the Arabic-speaking group, relating to their distrust in politicians and to people they meet for the first time. It was amongst this group that the 'Not at all' response was indicated by a clear majority and all other responses throughout this question tended to err on the side of 'Completely' or 'Somewhat'. Close to a half (47.6%) of the Arabic-speaking group responded that they did 'not at all' trust people they meet for the first time, additional 29.5% said that they trusted 'not very much'. Trust in politicians was similarly low: 44.6% reported not trusting 'at all' and further 36.7% admitted trusting 'not very much' (see Table 8).

Respondents indicated that of all the groups suggested, they are least likely to trust people they meet for the

first time, with 36.8% of the sample indicating 'not at all' and less than 3% of respondents indicating 'completely' and 35.8% indicating 'somewhat'.

An important overall finding is that the trust in family does not spill over to the trust in relatives. While the majority of people in all three groups indicated that they completely trust family. More specifically, 78.4% of Africans, 84.1% of Pacific Islanders and 72.3% of Arabic speakers completely trust their family. However, when it came to relatives the respondents were less sure. Pacific Islanders tended to trust their relatives the most, with 56.3% indicating they trust them 'completely'. For the African and Arabic-speaking respondents, however, 'somewhat' was the most common response. 44.3% of African youth responded 'somewhat', 38.9% responded 'completely' and 12.0% responded 'not very much'. The Arabic-speaking group displayed the lowest levels in trust in relatives. 47.6% of this group responded 'somewhat', 25.9% responded 'completely', 17.9% responded 'Not very much', while 6.6% responded 'Not at all'. See Table 8 for more details.

Table 8: How much do you trust...? – Arabic - speaking group

HOW MUCH DO YOU TRUST...?	NOT AT ALL	NOT VERY MUCH	SOMEWHAT	NO ANSWER	COMPLETELY
...POLITICIANS?	44.6%	36.7%	13.3%	3.0%	2.4%
...PEOPLE YOU MEET FOR THE FIRST TIME?	47.6%	29.5%	18.1%	3.0%	1.8%

This was shown to be true of Arabic-speaking participants in the qualitative survey as well. One participant explained their hesitance to join a group with people they didn't already know:

*Yeah, I like to go to things where I kind of know my way around and know the people involved. If it's something new or something I don't know anything about, then yeah, I feel a bit uncomfortable and wouldn't be too fond of joining up a group if it's like that. (Arabic-speaking, Male, 21, Brisbane)*

Another Arabic-speaking participant explained how his relatives reacted to him showing an interest in politics and also joining the Labor Party:

*I'll be honest with you, as soon as I joined the Labor Party it became the biggest issue in Australia for my relatives. It was like they just started criticising it left, right and centre. Not because they might have disagreed with it, they probably would have been very Labor their whole lives but generally because I'm involved with it, straight away they believed that I believed everything that*

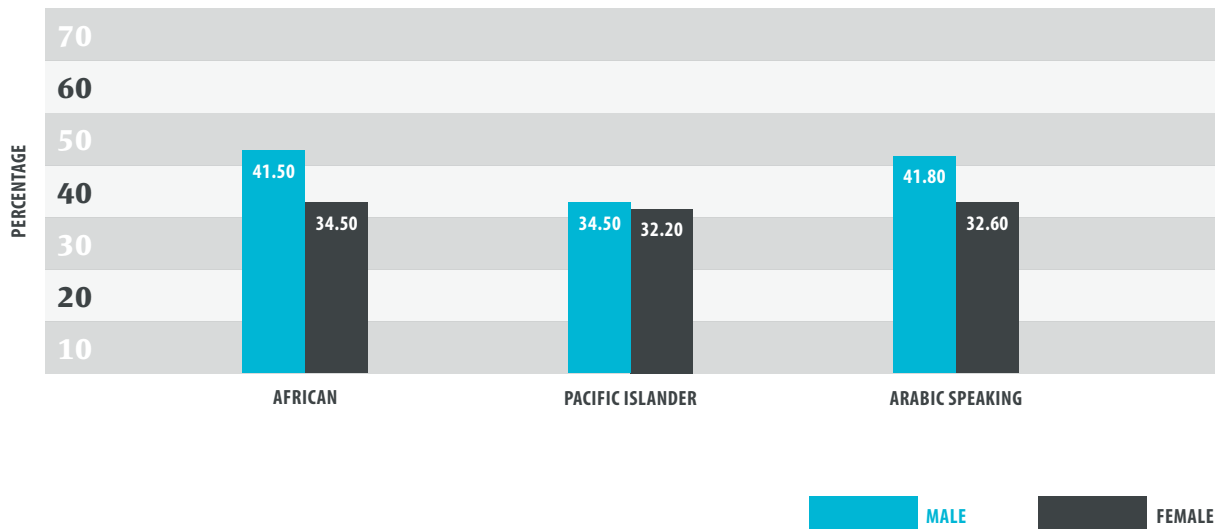
*Labor does I actually have 100 per cent views on it. They think it's interesting for them to lower the Labor Party and criticise it and stuff like that. (Arabic-speaking, Male, 21, Brisbane)*

Tallying up the 'not very much' and 'not at all' answers, the study found that overall, Arabic-speaking youth displayed the greatest distrust in politicians (81.3%). For African respondents, this level was 64.7% while for Pacific Islanders 70.1%. For Arabic-speaking respondents, distrust in politicians was closely followed by distrust in people who they meet for the first time (77.1%), then people from another country and people in the local area (65.7%), people from another religion (57.2%) and police and law enforcement agencies (52.4%).

African youth exhibited the highest lack of trust in people they meet for the first time (69.5% answered 'not at all' or 'not very much'). This was followed by distrust in politicians (64.7%), people in the local area (58.1%), people from another country (52.1%), police and law enforcement (49.1%), and people from another religion (48.5%).



Figure 15: The main thing that keeps me from being involved is being too busy



Pacific Island youth also had lowest levels of trust in people they meet for the first time, with a significant 84.1% of respondents indicated trusting 'not very much' or 'not at all'. This is followed by a lack of trust in politicians (77.5%), people from another country (70.2%), people from another religion (63.0%) and people in the local area (51.0%). Again, the qualitative data revealed a hesitance to participate in a group with people that they did not already know. As one African participant described:

*It's just because I know that I'm a lot different to - like sometimes when I'm in a group where there's - like as you said before you asked me why I would like people from my culture to be in the group. If it's all people let's say from a different background, I'll feel like an outsider just because I know that I'm different, like we're from different places (African, Female, 17, Brisbane).*

### Being Too Busy

Quantitative data showed that the most common barrier to engagement for all three groups was 'being too busy', with 37.7% of African and 34.3% of Pacific Island youth and 36.7% of Arabic speakers saying they were too busy. Among the African and Pacific Island groups being too busy was more likely to be a barrier to cross-cultural engagement for 15-17 year olds. In the African group, 42.9% of 15-17 year olds and 34% of those 18 and over cited being too busy as a barrier. In the Pacific Island group, 35.7% of 15-17 year olds and 30% of those 18 and over reported being too busy. The Arabic-speaking group differed in that it was the 18 and over group that was more likely to be too busy with 44% of them as opposed to 26.2% of the 15-17 year olds, saying that being too busy was a barrier to cross cultural engagement.

As illustrated in the Figure above (Figure 15), across all three groups the percentage of males who reported they were too busy to engage in cross-cultural activities than females.

Across all three groups, being too busy became less of a hindrance with an increase in the length of residence. Among the African group, 40.5% of those who had been in Australia for less than 5 years, 39.7% of those that had been in Australia for 6-10 years and only 20% of those that had been in Australia for more than 11 years cited being too busy as a barrier to cross cultural engagement. Of the Pacific Island group 50% of those participants that had been in Australia for less than 5 years, 39.1% of those who had lived in Australia for 6-10 years, 29.3% of those that lived in Australia for 11 or more years and 26.7% of those that were born in Australia were too busy. In Arabic speaking group, 42.4% of the newly arrived, 40% of those that had been in Australia for 6-10 years, 38.1% of those had been in Australia for more than 11 years and 32.5% of those that were born in Australia reported being too busy.

### Community Expectations

When asked about the main reasons stopping them getting involved, from the list of eight options only a small number of participants agreed with the statement that 'Family wants me to stay home' as a reason for not participating in social activities. The largest number of people who indicated this as a reason were Africans (13.8%). Only 13.2% of Pacific Island youth and 10.8% of Arabic speakers said that their family prevented them from more active participation in social events. A much larger percentage of Muslims (13.2%) than Christian (5.6%) Arabic speakers found this to be a barrier to participation in cross-cultural groups.

While family expectations were not seen as a barrier to cross-cultural engagement and parents were generally seen as being supportive of activities outside of their family/ethnic group, the qualitative data suggests that intra-community demands made it impossible for participants to engage cross culturally even if the idea was not explicitly disapproved. This also corresponds with the data on being too busy which suggests that participants are too heavily involved in their own communities to be able to participate in any others.

Several Pacific Island participants reported that parents did not understand their desire for cross-cultural engagement. As one interviewee noted:

*We need to interact. If they (parents) listen to youth, get the opinion from youth that will mean more interactions with different cultures. (Female, Pacific Island focus group, Brisbane)*

Interviewees indicated an ongoing struggle to balance family and community expectations with personal desires around network engagement. One interviewee described how his obligation to church choir, which prevented him from playing rugby, left him 'feeling devastated... [because he]...really wanted to play.' He went on to say that if he could play he would 'feel happier because you get more friends and you meet more people' (Pacific Islander, Male, 16, Melbourne). This example was repeated by a number of participants who felt restricted by their community obligations.

*There's one - especially with rugby and Samoan School at the same time every week. So even though I train with my team and I want to be good at rugby and be there for them because I have a part to play I can't actually because I had an earlier commitment to Samoan School. So I'm never there at the games and they are always thinking he's letting us down. But they don't really understand that I need to do Samoan School. (Pacific Islander, Male, 16, Brisbane)*

African interviewees reported high levels of inter-generational tensions related to network choices and network engagement even though underlying reasons differed. For several interviewees, the need to assist their parents in resettlement in Australia placed constraints on their time and ability to engage in other non-family related networks. One young man explained:

*Parents have their own troubles. The parents' view is that you shouldn't hang out with anyone because the sooner you leave, the more they are alone. And they have their own worries. (African, Male, Brisbane)*

Many African young people also felt that their families were culturally different to Australian families and that this created a barrier to engaging cross-culturally. These differences were

expressed in a number of ways; some simply said that they were more comfortable with other African people who shared their culture. Others explicitly mentioned difference as a barrier to cross-cultural engagement. One participant said:

*Because we have different cultures. If you're talking about the Australian ones, some stuff that we agree on they don't. Some of the things that they think is kind of normal are like very unacceptable for us to do. (African, Brisbane, 16, Female)*

Unlike many African and Pacific Island interviewees, Arabic-speaking participants did not appear to resist their parents'/communities input nor feel resentment towards them. Several participants noted that while parents were actively involved in shaping life and network choices, it didn't necessarily present a problem. One person said that:

*I think my values and my family's values; they are pretty much the same. (Arabic speaker, Female, 18, Brisbane)*

Although they felt that their parents and their community had a great deal of control over their decision making, they did not appear to resist it. One participant explained that this was because he shared his parents' ideals:

*In every aspect parents are heavily involved. They have a big say. But you got the same aim, the same goals, so there's no point to rebel against it. (Arabic speaker, Male, Brisbane)*

Some interviewees acknowledged differences between their lifestyle and the expectations of their parents. Some mentioned that their life was different from their parents' life experiences at the same age. This created some challenges. However, the participants did not talk about many family tensions. This quote exemplifies differences in lifestyle expectations that young people perceived to exist between two generations of parents and children:

*The things that I've been exposed to in my life are not the things my family's been exposed to... I'm talking about my direct family in this sense... not so much my extended family. Like my sisters and my brothers for example, they didn't pursue higher education. Their interests weren't geared towards being directly involved in community. Their interests were elsewhere, like their interests were in common direction towards having a family, having children, and raising them and working also. So their interests were different from mine for various reasons (Arabic speaker, Female, 25, Melbourne).*

# SECTION 7. VOLUNTEERING

# VOLUNTEERING

In 2011, the Australian Government adopted the National Volunteering Strategy (a prototype of Volunteering Strategy has existed in Victoria since 2009). The strategy document acknowledges that people aged 18–24 years old volunteer less (27%) than the Australian average (36%). Some groups are markedly under-represented in data on volunteering because they contribute to their communities in ways that they do not perceive or define as formal volunteering. The document states: ‘Culturally and linguistically diverse communities and Indigenous communities, in particular, often give large amounts of time to supporting others but report lower rates of formal volunteering’ (National Volunteering Strategy, 2011: 28). The National Volunteering Strategy (2011: 12) suggests that flexible, project-based roles, meaningful work with room for autonomy, innovative use of technology and rewarding social connections are vital in attracting today’s young volunteers.

Volunteering, especially among young people, needs to be considered in broad and flexible terms, as active participation and engagement. As such, volunteering is regarded as one of the pillars of democratic societies, and an activity that provides opportunities for young people to develop civic attitudes and duties (Weber 2011). As an activity it is tightly linked to democratic processes.

A recent report on social cohesion in Australia, the Scanlon Foundation’s Mapping Social Cohesion Report (2011), linked voluntary work and community involvement, which could include any unpaid work given to ‘a school, a sporting club, the elderly, a religious group or people who have recently arrived to settle in Australia’ (Markus 2011: 22). Researchers studying participation among young people point to the fact that volunteering can be formal (activities involving churches, schools, organisations etc.) and informal (activities involving neighbourhood and community support) and that young people volunteer through many avenues which can be very diverse. Institutions such as schools, churches, community associations, or interest based groups are not the only places through which young people find pathways to voluntary work. Their volunteering is in fact much more likely to occur through their friendship networks or other family members (Andolina et al. 2003, Hartley 2001, Planty and Regnier 2003).

Some more recent studies found an increase in popularity of voluntary work defined as ‘social-cause’ activities as opposed to ‘standard-cause’ activities among young people (Metz, McLellan and Youniss 2003; Weber 2011). Social-cause service means that volunteers are directly involved in causes or activities that help people who are in need, are disadvantaged or marginalised. Standard-cause service, on the other hand, encapsulates activities which assist other people but don’t involve exposure to the issues of inequality or injustice in society (Weber 2011). Recent findings on volunteering among young people in Victoria gathered through an online survey (Wynne 2011) suggest that volunteers start in standard-cause roles and later begin to take on social-cause volunteering. This was only partially supported by our qualitative data. Several young people in our study were first drawn to volunteering because of their strong beliefs in the need for social justice and desire to make a change, which influenced them becoming involved in ‘social-cause’ service.

## Forms of Volunteering

Even though the project’s findings confirmed interest among young people in volunteering activities that are linked to broader social justice issues and issues of inequality, these types of volunteering were still generally less common than the standard-cause activities. Standard-cause activities in this study included participation in:

- School-based groups
- Ethnic community groups
- Recreation groups
- Religious groups

A set of options from which participants could choose from created a division between standard-cause and social-cause activities. Since school-based, ethnic community, recreation, religious groups and volunteering groups were listed under the same question, involvement in school based, community and religious groups was could be seen as ‘standard-cause’ activity whereas involvement in a volunteer group was understood as more of a social-cause activity. For the entire sample in Melbourne and Brisbane, the highest participation rates were recorded for religious groups and the lowest for ethnic community groups (see Table 9).

*Table 9: Involvement in Social Groups in the Past Year – Total Sample*

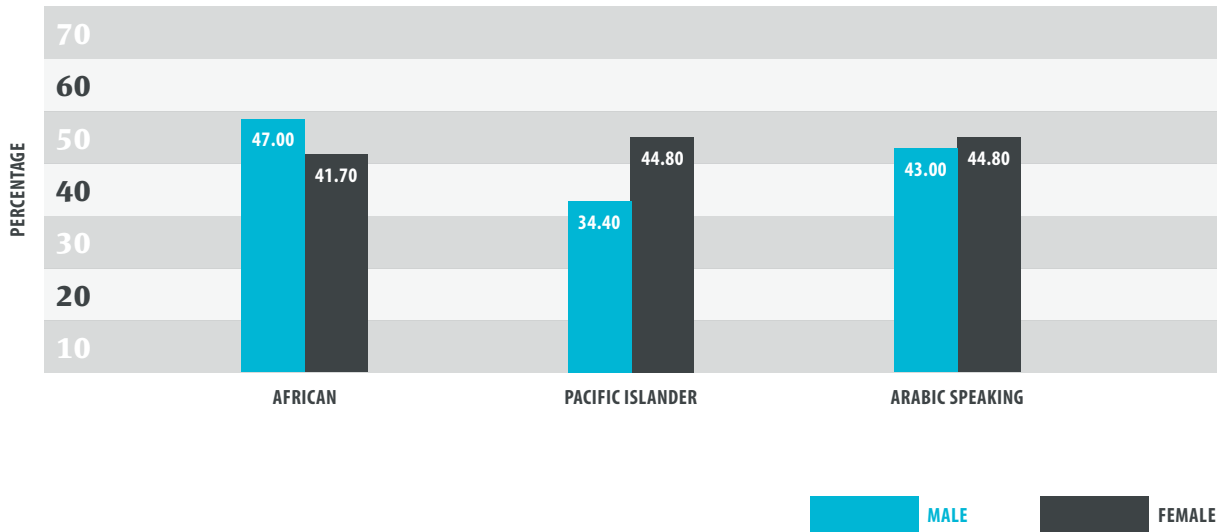
INVOLVEMENT IN SOCIAL GROUPS IN THE PAST YEAR	PERCENTAGE OF SAMPLE
RELIGIOUS GROUPS	44.4%
SCHOOL-BASED GROUPS	43.0%
RECREATION GROUP	39.5%
VOLUNTEER GROUPS	36.8%
ETHNIC COMMUNITY GROUP	34.9%
OTHER	19.0%

### School - Based Groups

In regards to the school-based groups, all three groups had around 40% participation rate, with slightly more active participation among African and Arabic-speaking youth. 44.3% of African youth, 44.2% of Arabic-speakers and 40.4% of Pacific Island young people said they were involved in a school-based group. Comparison of responses from Melbourne with those from Brisbane shows a disparity in participation between the two states. That is, 53.5% of the Melbourne sample has been active in school-based groups in the past year. Specifically, African and Arabic-speaking youth in Melbourne have been particularly active in school groups. Among the Melbourne sample 56.3% of Africans, 54.4% of Arabic-speakers and 48.1% of Pacific Island young people participated in these groups.

A different pattern of youth participation in school-based groups exists in the Brisbane sample. A minority of youth in Brisbane have been active in school-based groups in the past year – 31.6% of the sample. African and Pacific Island youth in Brisbane in particular have not been active in such groups (22.8% and 27% respectively). Arabic-speaking youth in Brisbane have been slightly more active in these groups in the past year (43%). The role of educational institutions and the status of public schooling in two different states may have influenced this outcome. What this difference also shows is the need to be attentive to the differences between states when implementing services as schools may serve as a bridge between young people and service providers. Among African participants, the age did not play a decisive role in whether people participated in the school-based activities or not. As seen from the Figure 16, in contrast to other two groups, more African males than females participated in these activities (47% of males compared to 41.7% of females).

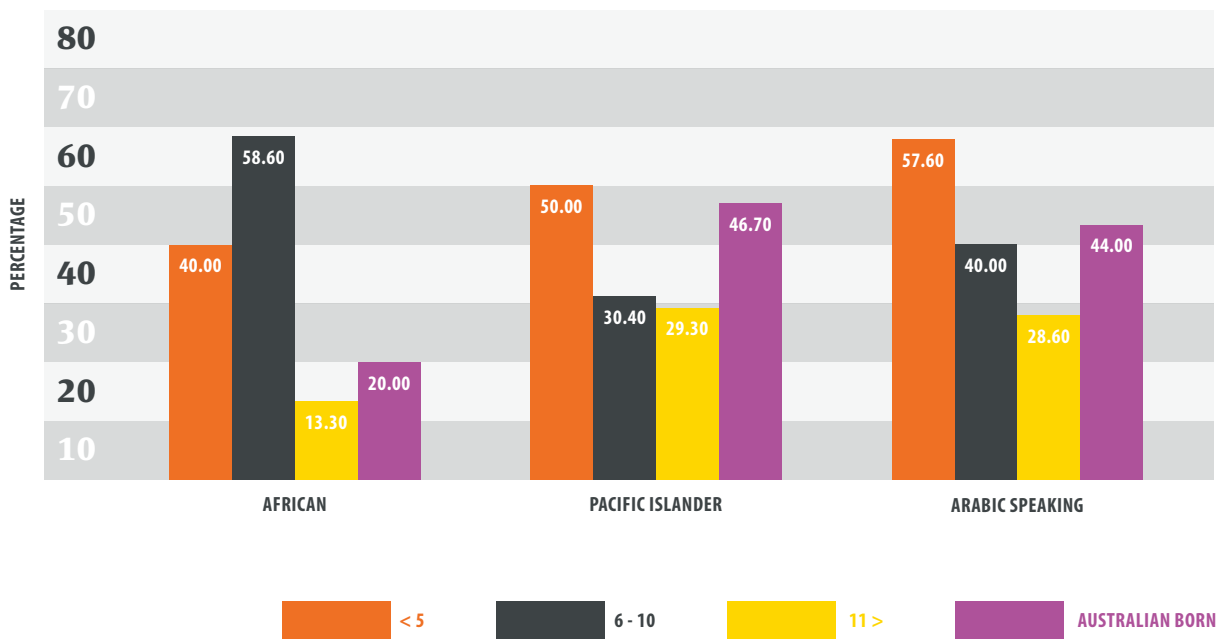
Figure 16: Involvement in school based groups by gender



In the African group, participants who had lived in Australia for 6-10 years (58.6%) were more likely to participate in school-based activities than the newly

arrived (40%) and those who had lived in Australia for 11 or more years (13.3%) (see Figure 17).

Figure 17: Involvement in school based groups by length of residence





In the Pacific Island group, 15-17 year olds (45.7%) were more likely to be involved than those that were 18 and over (36.3%). Females (44.8%) in this group were more likely than males (34.4%) to be involved in school based activities. Participation seemed to decline with length of settlement among Pacific Island young people: 50% of newly arrived participants, 30.4% of those who had lived in Australia for 6-10 years and 29.3% of those who had lived in Australia for 11 or more years participated. However, 46.7% of those that were born in Australia also took part in school based activities.

In the Arabic-speaking group, 47.7% of 15-17 year olds and 41.6% of those 18 years and over participated in school activities. Females (46.6%) were more likely than males (43%) to participate. Period of settlement had some effect on participation in the school based activities: 57.6% of the newly arrived, 40% of those who lived in Australia for 6-10 years and 28.6% of those that lived in Australia for 11 or more years, participated. However, 44% of those that were born in Australia also took part in school based activities. Only 38.3% of Muslim participants took part in school based activities, as opposed to 53.7% of Christian participants.

Even though some interviews took place in the school settings, participants were not specifically asked about participation in the school-based groups, and data that directly addresses this kind of networking is scarce.

## Ethnic Community Groups

In the context of ethnic community groups, there was an overall low level of participation (34.9%). This was particularly characteristic to the Pacific Island and Arabic-speaking respondents. Only 22.9% of Arabic-speaking respondents and 28.5% Pacific Island young people have been involved in such groups in the past year. In contrast to this, a majority of African respondents, 52.7% confirmed their participation in ethnic community groups in the past year.

Interviews confirmed high rates of involvement in the community organisations among African respondents. However, many African youths also felt disaffected by the community organisations or felt that these

organisations are not really in need of younger volunteers; that they are 'self-sufficient'. One respondent said:

*I made a conscious decision early on to not volunteer for anything to do with my ethnic community, because they are already doing that by themselves. So it's about getting outside of that little niche. (Female, African Focus Group, Melbourne)*

On average, African participants still had the highest rates of participation in the ethnic community groups. Older African participants, who were 18 and over, were more likely to participate in these groups (54.7%) than younger 15-17 year olds (51.4%). Slightly more females (53.6%) than males (51.8%) had participated in ethnic community group activities over the past year. Participation tended to increase with the length of settlement. More specifically, 47.1% of the newly arrived, 56.9% of those that had lived in Australia for 6-10 years and 73.3% of those who had lived in Australia for 11 or more years had participated in an ethnic community group in the past year.

Considering the age of participants, the lowest participation rates were among a younger cohort of Arabic speakers. Only 9.2% of 15-17 year olds compared to 31.7% of those 18 and over had participated in ethnic group activities in the past year. In the Arabic-speaking group participation also increased with the years of settlement. For example, 12.1% of the newly arrived Arabic speakers, 16% of those who had lived in Australia for 6-10 years and 38.1% of those that had lived in Australia for 11 or more years had participated in ethnic group activities in the past year. Also, 26.2% of those Arabic speakers who were born in Australia had participated. Notably, 28% of Muslim participants were involved with their ethnic group, while only 14.8% of Christian participants were.

Interviews confirmed higher community involvement among Muslim interviewees and some of them were specifically engaged in the groups of Muslim youth:

*I teach at a Sunday school every week. It's not real teaching, but it's teaching kids about Arabic, about their culture. They're not all Arabs, they're all Muslims, so teaching them about Islam and what not. There are some Arabs over there, teaching little kids, so I'm part of that. (Arabic speaker, Female, 21, Melbourne)*

*Yeah we're all Muslim and we all have different ethnic backgrounds. Yeah, it's not that big. There's probably maybe 10 of us in it. (Female, 18, Brisbane)*

*With Al-Nisa I had to form a lot of networks to be able to get Al-Nisa into the government arena, but of course with the help of everyone in the group, not just me. (Female, 23, Brisbane)*

While usually having mixed groups of friends, Muslim young women expressed some difficulties in socializing with some of their friends who were non-Muslim. Barriers related mainly to different patterns of socializing and the lack of places to go to for Muslim young women. Some associations, such as Al-Nisa, provided such open spaces for young Muslim women.

Among Pacific Island young people, participation in ethnic community groups also increased with the years of settlement: 47.1% of the newly arrived, 56.9% of those that had lived in Australia for 6-10 years and 73.3% of those who had lived in Australia for 11 or more years had participated in an ethnic community group in the past year. These percentages need to be noted, however, in the context of overall participation rates, which were low for Pacific Island young people.

## Recreational Groups

In the context of recreational groups (e.g. sports, arts and dance), the highest involvement rates were among Pacific Island young people and the lowest among Arabic speakers. Overall, 45.7% of Pacific Island young people, 42.5% of Africans, and 30.7% of Arabic speakers reported involvement in the recreational groups.

Among the African group those aged 18 and over (47.4%) were more likely to participate in recreational groups than those aged 15-17 (35.7%). Only 33.3% of females in this group participated in recreation groups as compared to 51.8% of males. Participation significantly increased with a period of settlement 24.7% of the newly arrived, 60.3% of those that had lived in Australia for 6-10 years and 66.7% of those that had lived in Australia for 11 or more years had participated in recreation group activities in the past year.

Participation in recreational groups was lowest among the Arabic-speaking group. Those aged 18 and over (32.7%) were more active than those that were aged 15-17 (27.7%). Males (32.9%) were more likely to participate than females (28.7%). There was no correlation between period of settlement and participation in recreation groups. 36.4% of newly arrived, 44% of those that had lived in Australia for 6-10 years, 33.3% of those that had lived in Australia for 11 or more years and 25% of those that were born in Australia took part in these activities. Similarly, religion did not play a significant role in this as 30.8% of Muslims and 29.6% of Christians took part in these activities.

The situation was slightly different in the Pacific Island group, where younger people (15-17) were more involved than older (18 and over). For those aged 15-17 participation rate was 52.9% while only 40% of those aged 18 and over had participated in the last year. 46.9% of males and 44.8% of females had participated. There was no pattern between period of settlement and participation. While 41.7% of those that had lived in Australia for 5 or less years had participated, 43.5% of those that had lived in Australia for 6-10 years, 36.6% of those that had lived in Australia for 11 or more years and 53.35% of those that were born in Australia had also participated.

The fact that the participation of Pacific Island young people in recreation groups declines with age is an important outcome of the study. There can be multiple reasons for why Pacific Island young people 'drop out' from such groups or get more disengaged from them. Interviews provided little data relating to these reasons. Some interviewees pointed to the lack of motivation or time because of employment and/or schooling that caused their partial disengagement within such groups over time. Some, however, talked about the lack of resources or information about the existence of these groups:

*No I'm not involved. And I'm not sure, because I don't even know if there is anything, like Polynesian community things ... Yeah, I don't know of any (Pacific Islander, Female, 18, Melbourne).*

## Religious Groups

As mentioned above, youth from our sample were most active in participating in the religious groups in the past

year, though this is only a minority (44.4%). This level of participation is comparable to other groups, such as school based, community, recreational, religious and voluntary groups.

A majority of African (54.5%) and Pacific Island (52.3%) respondents were involved in the religious groups in the past year. Arabic speaking youth in our sample were significantly less active in religious groups in the past year – only 27.1% of this group participated in these groups, and there were not considerable differences between two religions (Islam and Christianity). This finding calls for further examination of individual factors influencing young people's attitudes towards religion. It also calls for further examination of a wider socio-political context which may facilitate or hinder young people's participation in the religious groups.

The lowest numbers of participation in religious groups (21.4%) were noted among Arabic-speakers born in Australia. Among those who had lived in Australia for 11 or more years the figures were much higher (42.9%) compared to those that had lived in Australia between 6-10 years (36%). The fact that Arabic-speaking group overall showed the lowest percentages of participation in religious groups does not mean that they think religion is unimportant in their lives. Several Arabic-speakers in interviews mentioned how their personal spirituality and religious beliefs have an important role in their lives. The fact that they were not heavily involved in the religious groups does not mean that they did not self-identify as religious. In their opinion, religion did only rarely influence their choice of networks or their friendship ties.

Another reason for lesser reported involvement of Arabic-speakers in religious groups may be that such groups are simply not available for young people to the extent they are to the other two groups. Participation of Arabic-speakers for instance rose with age: 20% of 15-17 year olds and 31.7% of those aged 18 and over had participated in religious groups in the past year, which means that Arabic-speakers over 18 years of age found it easier to become engaged in a religious group. Females were much more involved (34.5%) in religious groups compared to men (19%). Low percentage of Arabic-speaking men involved in religious groups can be explained in several different ways, but may also reflect their pronounced sense of the need to 'assimilate' into the mainstream society, along

with its perceived secular elements. Since the majority of our Arabic-speaking respondents are from either Lebanese or Iraqi backgrounds and the recent survey data from Scanlon Foundation (Mapping Social Cohesion Report, 2011) suggests that the highest proportions of negative feelings towards immigrants in Australia are directed exactly towards these two ethnic groups, this may be another push factor towards the feeling the move for these youths to 'blend in' and assimilate.

Among African and Pacific Island groups there were also considerable gender differences in participation in religious groups: 64.3% of African females were involved as opposed to 44.6% of African males and 60% of Pacific Island females as opposed to 40.6% of Pacific Island males. The reasons for these gender differences can be related to the young women's lower participation in some other group forms, such as recreational groups, and a lack of other socializing options available to them. Unlike in the Arabic-speaking group, younger Africans and Pacific Island young people were participating in the religious groups more: 60% of 15-17 year old Africans participated compared to 50.5% of those aged 18 and over and 54.3% of Pacific Island young people aged 15-17 were involved compared to 50% of them aged 18 and over. Period of settlement had no reported effect on participation among African and Pacific Island groups. Whether we can attribute these differences to the different patterns of adjusting and integrating linked to the notions of identity and belonging, would need a more thorough in-depth study directly addressing this set of variables.

## Volunteer Groups

The study had a separate 'volunteer group' involvement option, which was chosen by 36.8% of respondents.

Recent national statistics on volunteering in Australia show that in 2010, 6.1 million people aged 18 years and over in Australia participated in voluntary work. This amounts to 36% of the Australian population over 18 years of age, with women (38%) more likely to volunteer than men (34%). People in the middle age groups (35-44 years) were more likely to volunteer than those in younger (18-34 years) and older age groups (65-74 years). For people who reported a language

other than English spoken at home, the rate of volunteering was 25%.<sup>2</sup> Young people in general volunteer less than older people, but the number of your volunteers is rising. The rate of volunteering by young people in Australia for instance increased from 16% in 1995 to 27.1% in 2010 (Volunteering Australia 2012).

The figure of 36.8% derived through our research is considerably higher than the national young people's volunteering average. Our figure was relatively consistent across all three participant groups, with the Arabic-speaking group having the highest participation rate. Among Arabic speakers in our study, 40.4% said they were involved in a volunteer group in the last year. In addition, 36% of African participants and 33.8% of Pacific Island young people said that they were volunteering in the last year. As we can see, involvement in volunteer groups proved quite popular, especially relative to the national volunteering rates (36%).

Consistent with the view that volunteering increases with age, young people over 18 were more likely to get involved in volunteer groups than younger (15-17 year old) participants. There were no major gender differences. Numbers of young females volunteering was a bit higher among young Africans and Arabic-speakers, and lower among Pacific Island young people. Generally, the participation rate increased with length of settlement in Australia.

Among young people born in Australia (note that this does not apply to Africans because they were all born overseas), the rates of volunteering were lower than the ones for overseas born. For instance, the highest percentages of people volunteering were among Pacific Island young people who lived in Australia for 11 or more years (53.7%). Among Pacific Island young people born in Australia, 35% volunteered. Among Arabic-speaking young people who lived in Australia for 11 or more years, 52.4% volunteered in the last year, but

only 28.6% of Arabic-speakers born in Australia said the same (although, note that this number still higher than the national average for young people). For African youth, the numbers were relatively consistent in all settlement periods.

## Motivations for Volunteering

### *Motivations for Involvement in Community Groups*

We measured the significance of community involvement by asking two questions. First, participants were asked if it was important to their family or guardian that the respondents get involved with their community. Second, we asked if it was important to the respondents themselves to get involved in their community.

Among African young people, 33.7% said that involvement in their community was important to their parents and 36.5% said it was important to them. For the 15-17 year olds community involvement was more important to their family (32.9%) than to the respondent (28.6%). However, for those aged 18 and above it was more important to the participants (42.1%) than their family that they were involved with their community. Slightly more young males felt it was important to their parents (39%) than those who themselves thought it was important (37.3%). On the other hand, fewer females (28.6%) in the African group felt it was important to their parents than those that felt it was important to them (35.7%). There was no apparent correlation between period of settlement and the importance of community involvement. That is, 36.9% of the newly arrived, 36.2% of those that had lived in Australia for 6-10 years and 6.7% of those that had lived in Australia for 11 or more years felt that it was important to their parents. Also, 35.3% of the newly arrived, 37.9% of those that had lived in Australia for 6-10 years and 20% of those that had lived in Australia for 11 or more years, felt it was important to them to be involved in the community.

Among the Pacific Island young people, similar number of people felt that community involvement was important to their family (35.1%) and to them (36.4%). More 15-17 year olds felt that community involvement was important to them (37.1%) than those who felt it was important to their family (31.4%). However,

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2. In the General Social Survey (GSS) a volunteer is defined as someone who, in the previous 12 months, willingly gave unpaid help, in the form of time, service or skills, through an organisation or group. ABS notes that some people do unpaid work under some form of compulsion because of employment (for example, work for the dole) or as part of study commitments. Such work is excluded from ABS measures of volunteering (ABS 2010).

this changed for the participants aged 18 and over - more of them felt that it was important to their family (37.5%) than those who felt it was important to them (35%). On the whole more participants, both males and females felt community involvement was important to them (34.4% and 37.9%) than those that felt it was important to their families (32.8% and 36.8% correspondingly).

There did not appear to be any correlation between period of settlement and the importance of community involvement to the family of the participants. That is, 37.5% of the newly arrived, 52.2% of those that had lived in Australia for 6-10 years, 29.3% of those that had lived in Australia for 11 or more years and 31.7% of those that were born in Australia felt it was important to their family that they were involved in their community. However, the importance of involvement for the participants themselves increased with period of settlement. That is, 25% of the newly arrived, 34.8% of those that had lived in Australia for 6-10 years and 48.8% of those that had lived in Australia for 11 or more years felt it was important to get involved in their community. In comparison, only 33.3% of those who were born in Australia felt this way.

In the Arabic-speaking group 38.6% of young people felt that community involvement was important to their family and 30.7% felt it was important to them. More 15-17 year olds felt that community involvement was important to them (33.8%) than those that felt it was important to their family (24.6%). However, more participants aged 18 and over felt that community engagement was important to their parents (47.5%) than those that felt it was important to them (28.6%). When broken down by gender, more participants, both male and female, felt that community involvement was more important to their parents (40.5% and 36.8%) than those that felt it was important to them (32.1% and 29.4% correspondingly).

There did not appear to be any correlation between period of settlement and the importance of community engagement to the participant's families. 51.5% of the newly arrived, 32% of those that had lived in Australia for 6-10 years, 47.6% of those that had lived in Australia for 11 or more years and 33.3% of those that were born in Australia felt that community involvement was important to their family. However, the importance of community involvement to the participants themselves appeared to decrease with the length of settlement: 45.5%

of newly arrived, 24% of those that had lived in Australia for 6-10 years and 19% of those that had lived in Australia for 11 or more years felt that community involvement was important. Of those that were born in Australia 29.6% felt that community engagement was important. A higher percentage of Muslim participants (37%) than Christians (20.4%) felt that it was important to be involved in community groups for both their families and themselves (39.3% and 35.6% correspondingly).

### ***Motivations for Involvement in Volunteer Groups***

A qualitative study among Somali youth in Melbourne carried out by Omar (2009) showed that a majority of students interviewed emphasized the importance of volunteering for pursuing a successful career. Reasons for volunteering were diverse and included: to 'help people', 'learn different skills', 'receive work experience' and 'socialize with others' (Omar 2009: 75). Our study showed that young people also volunteer because they want to get involved in the community and they have a desire to belong:

*I joined because I really wanted to get involved in the community and do something. I find it really useless to just sit there and do nothing and not get out there and see different people and see what's going on (Arabic-speaking, Female, 21, Brisbane).*

Participants in this study viewed involvement in 'volunteer groups' by acknowledging broader, systemic social justice issues. Being involved in volunteer groups meant that they were actively engaged in the debates about larger systemic inequalities. There were two main motivations for the increased tendency towards 'social-cause services':

1. Desire and/or expectation of the broader social change; and
2. Positive self-affirmation

Determination, agency and action had, in general, positive effects on self-affirmation, because being involved and contribute to social change (often by being involved on more local levels) made people 'feel good'. They also got to meet new people or developed their social networks, which contributed to their increased employment options. For instance:

*Basically make a change in whatever needs to be changed. Anything in this society that actually needs a change, that's what I'm trying to do. What I'm trying to [help with] (Arabic Speaking, Female, 23, Brisbane).*

*Well I think it's quite - you get like a positive feeling, like you're helping people. You get to interact with other people and learn more about them and their own lives (Arabic-speaking, Female, 18, Brisbane).*

There were differences in volunteering between young people born outside of Australia as opposed to Australian born. Youth born overseas volunteered more. As most young people involved in volunteering groups thought that their volunteering contributed to social change (social-cause volunteering), higher volunteering rates among overseas born may reflect their challenges of belonging, which contribute to strengthening of their beliefs that social change is needed. Seeking engagement with broader, systemic social justice issues comes also from the desire to be accepted in the context of the national space and relates to the need to be active outside of one's ethnic group. As two people in the African focus group in Melbourne said:

*I made a conscious decision early on to not volunteer for anything to do with my ethnic community, because they are already doing that by themselves. So it's about getting outside of that little niche.*

And

*I've done them both (community and outside) concurrently, but when I started, I started outside. What I did when I came here was that I went to a youth group, after three years when I was here I became a member of the youth group that wasn't specific African.*

These opinions of young Africans seem to contradict the research results of Weber's (2011: 15) and Wynne's (2011: 3) studies, which found that it is uncommon for young people to become involved in social-cause service without having done any standard-cause service at some point.

In contrast, our study found that direct involvement in social-cause service without an extensive standard-cause service is common in particular in Arabic-speaking youth, especially girls. Among Arabic-speakers interviewed in Melbourne and Brisbane, young women were almost exclusively involved in social-cause service volunteering. Faith and religious beliefs seemed to have some influence on responses, with more Muslim than Christian young women reported being involved in social-cause service.

*Well my cultural background has very heavily effected who I am but I think more than that it's with issues of justice, like the conflict in the Middle East.[...] [t]he fact that I come from Middle Eastern i.e. Lebanese-Syrian extraction has helped to broaden my horizon and helped to develop a keen eye and keen heart for justice in the world and in the Middle East. Admittedly it's mostly focused there only because I have very close ties to that region, both personally and politically. (Arabic speaker, Female, 24, Melbourne)*

The feeling of belonging was one of the major things the social-cause activities assisted and developed, especially in the Muslim Arabic-speaking groups and among Pacific Island young people. Interviewees in Brisbane in particular mentioned this:

*I guess it's a sense of belonging, like you belong somewhere, they're your people. (Pacific Islander, Female, 21, Brisbane)*



# SECTION 8.

# PERCEPTIONS OF

# LEADERSHIP

# PERCEPTIONS OF LEADERSHIP

Perceptions of leadership among young people in the study have been informed by observing varied leadership practices. They noted that some leadership practices have taken a traditional route, equipping young people with some representational skills, and that they have been carried out strategically. Some other leadership practices have been intuitive and unplanned. As a practice, leadership has been learned and performed not only in youth leadership programs, but within families and communities. We understand it here as 'relational', adopting a definition proposed by Cunliffe and Eriksen (2011) who argue that leadership is about 'creating action and knowledge with others' and is based on 'talking with people'. Some of the participants in the study said that they see leadership as:

*Knowledge and different kind of thinking... It helps me to understand how they or others think (African Focus Group, Melbourne).*

Others observed that practicing being a leader allows them:

*To appreciate yourself and others. Because whatever you will say, there will be another side (African Focus Group, Melbourne).*

As a relational concept, leadership has many common traits with the concept of 'mentoring', which was seen as a positive idea among participants in the study. It was expressed particularly in African and Arabic-speaking focus groups in Melbourne, where leadership as an idea and a practice was more supported compared to Brisbane. In the above mentioned two focus groups, more formal forms of leadership were accepted, although leadership was still not imagined as an exclusively 'top down' process, but as a relational practice. 'Leadership' involved the expectation of a 'reward', but one that could have 'good' or 'bad' outcomes.

Especially among the African youth, participation and leadership were conditioned by the constant feeling of the need to 'prove yourself' and that 'no matter what you went through or what your

educational background is, you can actually do it.' The act of 'tuning oneself' sprang from this feeling:

*And it's about the time to prove yourself. Sometimes there are opportunities out there that come out of your bad situation. For example, I'm here today, I went to the University and I'm working (...) So we need to look at that. And also, looking at that and getting opportunity through that and also changing yourself and tune. Like in the music, you tune to the levels. (African Focus Group, Melbourne)*

Most of the data on leadership came from qualitative material. However, the survey referred to leadership issues in two different ways: from a group perspective and individual perspective. From a group perspective questions explored involvement in solving local problems or issues with other people in the local areas. From an individual perspective questions were asked on identifying characteristics of a good youth leader.

## **Involvement in Solving Local Problems or Issues with Other People in Local Areas: A Group Perspective**

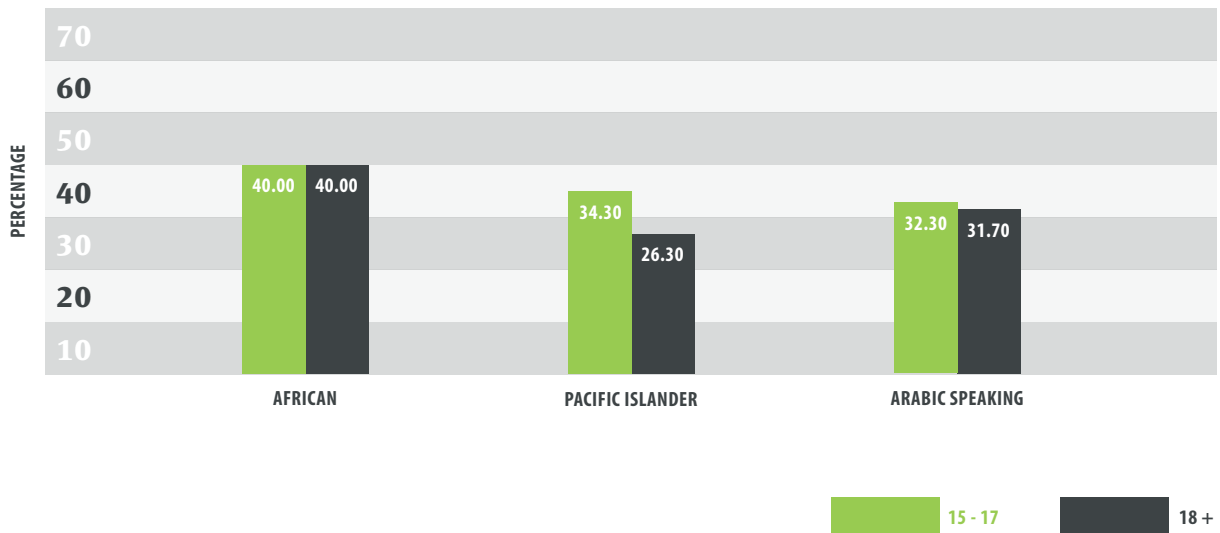
Overall, 34.3% of all respondents in the study have been involved in solving problems or issues with other people in their residential area. The strongest participation was recorded for Africans (40.1%), and slightly less participation was recorded for Arabic-speakers (31.9%) and Pacific Island young people (30.5%).

Of the African young people equal numbers (40%) of each age group had become involved in solving local problems or issues with other people in their area (see Figure 18). While 45.8% of males were involved, only 34.5% of females had helped to solve a local problem or issue (see Figure 19). The highest percentage of young Africans involved in solving local problems was among those who have lived in Australia for 6-10 years (55.2% of them were involved). In comparison to this, 30.6% of newly arrived and 26.7% of those who had lived in Australia for 11 or more years had been involved in solving local problems. A higher percentage of the Melbourne sample (46%) was involved than in the Brisbane sample (33.8%).





Figure 18: Involvement in solving local problems by age



In the Arabic-speaking group, an almost equal number of 15-17 year olds (32.3%) and those aged 18 and over (31.7%) were involved in solving local problems (see Figure 19). More males (35.4%) than females (28.7%) were involved in solving local problems. Among Arabic-speakers, newly arrived were the most active: 45.5% of newly arrived compared to 24% of those who had lived in Australia for 6-10 years were involved. However, the rate of involvement picked up among those who had lived in Australia for 11 or more years (42.9% of them were involved) and declined among Australian-born Arabic-speakers (27.4% of those that were Australian born had been involved in solving local problems). There were not considerable differences between Muslim and Christian Arabic-speakers. 30.8% of Muslims and 33.3% of Christians were involved. Slightly higher percentage of the Melbourne sample (33.7%) than the Brisbane sample (30%) was involved in solving local problems.

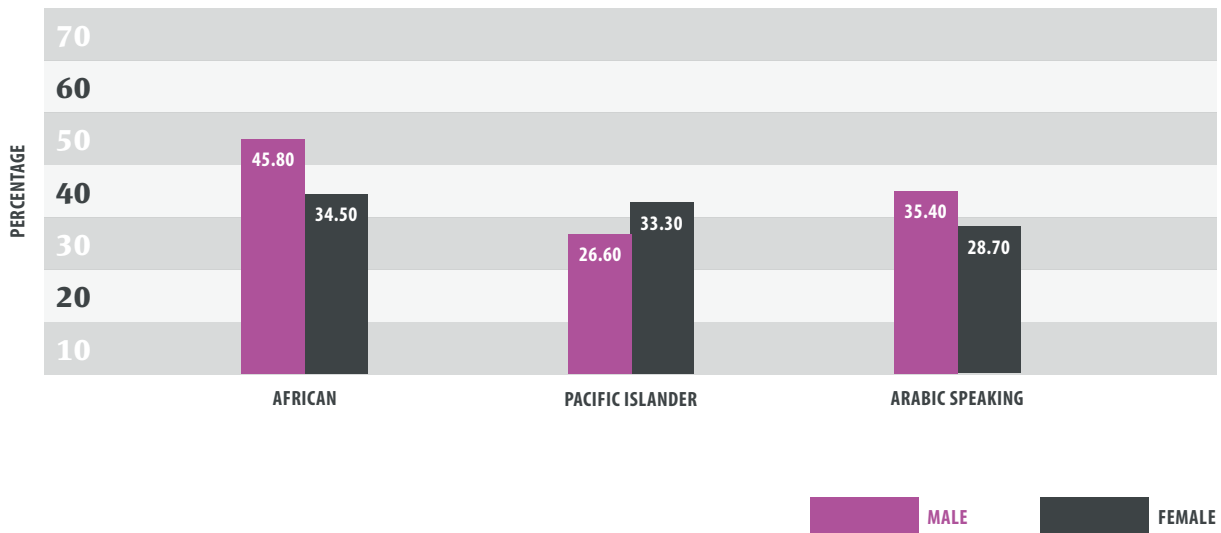
Even though it is difficult to generalize on the basis of interviews whether more enthusiasm about involvement in local issues was present among Melbourne-based African and Arabic-speaking young people than among Brisbane-based, the findings can be somewhat backed up by a number of self-initiated networks, organizations and advocacy groups (in communication with local governments) existing in Melbourne (for instance SAYAG Australian Sudanese Media Project, Horn of Africa Community Network, IMARA Advocacy etc.). Among African young people Melbourne, their involvement was to a large degree linked to personal and identity issues.

*I have to do this myself... And after that it was a lot of networking... I really liked that. I did that to prove myself. Because when you sit with students in the class, you start looking at special things like what is your country, how long have you been here, are you lucky to be here... if you look at these questions, they are loaded in a way... and I needed to do something about that (African Focus Group, Melbourne).*

Interviews and focus groups did not confirm gender differences in perceptions of leadership (more African and Arabic-speaking males and more Pacific Island females were involved in solving local issues). In fact, many interviewed young women were very active and involved in various community and advocacy groups.

In the Pacific Island group, 34.3% of 15-17 year olds and 26.3% of those aged 18 and over were involved in solving local issues (see Figure 18). A higher percentage of females (33.3%) than males (26.6%) were interested in this form of engagement. Similarly to the African group, those Pacific Island young people who had lived in Australia for 6-10 years were the most active (47.8% of them were involved). In comparison, 29.2% of the newly arrived, 31.7% of those who had lived in Australia for 11 or more years and 21.7% of those born in Australia were involved in solving local issues. In the Pacific Island group, a higher percentage of the Brisbane sample (31.9%) was involved than the Melbourne sample (29.1%).

Figure 19: Involvement in solving local problems by gender



Pacific Island groups in both Melbourne and Brisbane appeared to approach the concept and practice of leadership in a way which differed from the other two groups. Leadership, as understood by Pacific Island young people, is a characteristic that is inscribed in individuals and can be harboured by anyone. In this way, there is no particular need for conventional leadership. Pacific Island young people, particularly in Melbourne, also challenged the perception that leadership requires a hierarchical structure:

*With us, I don't think we have leaders. I think it's just a group of people and there's no one specifically where you go... oh that's the leader of the group, there's nothing like that. I think with Polynesians we're more on the basis... we all respect each other like... if somebody says something and somebody disagrees we kind of compromise with it... But it's not like somebody is leading a group and somebody is a follower (Pacific Island Focus Group, Melbourne).*

In the Pacific Island focus group in Melbourne the concept of mentoring was more readily accepted than the concept of leadership, because it could be translated into different contexts and could start within the family. It also had the potential to be more flexible, not necessarily adhering to a particular form of address or communication. There was a small group of older people from the Pacific Island communities accompanying young people at the Pacific Island focus group in Melbourne and one of them said:

*Through my experience of Pacific Island young leaders that I worked with, I had a feeling like the ones that really led were not the ones who held microphones or were in the faces of everybody. (Pacific Island Focus Group, Melbourne)*

Young people in the focus groups agreed with this statement, but did not develop their ideas. Only one young Pacific Islander in the Melbourne focus group was vocal about these problems:

*When our families do get together, that's with our family, you have the older people and then you have younger people. We don't really talk to aunts and uncles and things like that... It's more like we have to get certain food and then we go in our little commune and eat. It's not like all get together. (Pacific Island Focus Group, Melbourne)*

In the Brisbane focus group, young Pacific Island young people more vocally expressed their disagreement with traditional hierarchical positions within their families and said that it is challenging to get their voices out in the family or community settings. As they saw it, the limitations on them were posed by elders in the community, who were reluctant to 'give permission' to younger generations to do things.

*If we could start things ourselves, we would have had heaps done already. But you have to get permission and stuff by elders so nothing gets done. We don't get a chance. We want to lead in something and not just to be told.*

*We need an opportunity to have a voice and say what it is that we think and feel. Young people need a two-way communication with the people at the top who make decisions (Pacific Island Focus Group, Brisbane).*

Pacific Island communities in Brisbane are more spatially concentrated than in Melbourne and 'community' activities and interests were more substantial among Pacific Island young people in Brisbane. Pacific Island youth seemed to be more eager in being involved in community groups in Brisbane.

*Yeah, the community ones definitely. I've got a real interest in - not reaching out but just seeing what's out there and knowing that if I can help in any way then I'll definitely do it if it's something that interests me then yeah, definitely (Female, 21, Brisbane).*

Pacific Island community activities are less popular in Melbourne and it may be attributable also to the fact that the community is smaller and more spread out geographically. To one interviewee, growing up in Auckland in New Zealand and moving to Melbourne eight years ago, Melbourne felt a bit like a 'culture shock'.

*Growing up in Auckland, my group of friends at school, and my family, we were all Pacific Island young people. I did have the odd non-Pacific Island friend, but they were the minority. But then coming across over here, there were only like three of us that were Pacific Island young people and there were lots of other types of cultures. (...) I think now looking back, if we had stayed in New Zealand, I think I would've only been hanging out with my kind of people - Pacific Island young people. Coz I grew up with them, coz I'd do everything with them, but we came here, and Melbourne being a multicultural city, I've learnt about different cultures, and gained understanding about them, and I think that's made me a better person. I've become more multicultural (Female, 21, Melbourne).*

The claim to the 'multicultural space' and multicultural identity of Pacific Island young people in Melbourne was visible also from their other group involvement, for instance in the Anti-Racism Action Band (ARAB) performance group, programs of Footscray Community Arts Centre or MASSIVE hip hop choir which is also based in the western suburbs of Melbourne.

## Reported Characteristics of a 'Good Young Leader': An Individual Perspective

Our survey asked young people about what they think the characteristics of a good young leader are. Participants were asked to mark all that apply from the given options:

- Inspiring
- A role model
- Raise youth issues
- Kindness
- Friendly manner
- Considerate of others
- Respectful of others
- Comfortable speaking in public
- Standing up for others
- Having a firm opinion
- Ability to make decision
- Intelligence
- Ability to mobilize other people into action
- Resilience and courage

The survey data shows that 'respect' of other people is, overall, the most desired characteristic of a young leader. Whereas being a 'role model' was equally important as 'respectful of others' as a characteristic of a young leader for Pacific Island young people across the age, gender and length of residence subgroups, 'respectful of others' proved the most essential across the subgroups in the African and Arabic speaking groups. On the other hand, 'resilience' or 'having a firm opinion' were the least valued characteristics of a young leader across the groups and subgroups. Surprisingly, 'raising youth issues' also does not seem to be as important to young people across the three groups. In the African sample, this was the least commonly chosen characteristic. Nevertheless, it needs to be noted though that, in general, the list proved rather credible for young people since none of the optional responses listed was particularly unpopular.

Breaking the responses into groups and examining the balances between sub-groups, we can say that for younger cohort of Africans (15-17 years old), 'kindness' was the



most desirable attribute (70% of the entire African sample chose this option). For those over 18, 'inspiring' and 'a role model' were more desirable (68.4% chose this option). In both age groups, raising youth issues was the least required characteristic of a young leader (37.1% of 15-17 year olds and 44.2% of 18+ ticked this option). There were no gender differences in the African group: 75.9% of African males and 77.4% of African females thought that 'respect' is the most important characteristic of a young leader. The same was thought by recently settled young Africans (78.8% chose this option) and those who lived in Australia for 6-10 years (79.3% chose 'respectful of others'). 'Respect' dropped right to the bottom of wanted characteristics among those respondents who had lived in Australia for more than 11 years. However, it was still ticked by 53.3% of young Africans.

Among Pacific Island young people, 'a role model' and being 'respectful of others' were the most commonly chosen options in four sub-groups. 'A role model' was the most often chosen option among males (81.3%), those who had lived in Australia for less than five years (87.5%), those who had lived in Australia for more than 11 years (a high 97.2% of those chose this option) and the younger group of Pacific Island young people (15-17 year olds). 84.3% of Pacific Islanders chose 'a role model' and 'respectful of others'. Pacific Island young people who were 18 years of age or over, also thought 'respectful of others' is the most important characteristic of a young leader (88.8%), as well as Pacific Island females of whom 92% thought that 'respect' is a characteristic of a good youth leader. Therefore, while for Pacific Island males being 'a role model' was the most important leadership attribute, for Pacific Island females the most important was 'respectful of others'. Also, those Pacific Island young people who had lived in Australia for 6-10 years and those born in Australia thought that respect is the most significant characteristic that a young leader should possess (91.3% and 85% respectively ticked this option). On the other hand, 'resilience' was the least commonly chosen option among Pacific Island young people.

Among Arabic-speaking youth, the percentages were almost evenly balanced among several different characteristics of a young leader. However, 'kindness' was the most popular

characteristics of a young leader among younger Arabic-speakers (75.4%). There were notable gender differences. For Arabic-speaking males 'intelligence' proved to be recognised as the most important characteristic of a young leader (76.9%) while Arabic speaking females chose 'inspiring' and 'friendly manner' (both chosen by 69%). 'Friendly manner' along with 'respectful of others' was also ticked by the highest numbers of newly settled Arabic speakers (66.7%). 'Respectful of others' was very important also for Arabic speakers who had lived in Australia between 6 and 10 years (88%) as well as those who had lived in Australia for 11 or more years (85.7%). Equal number (85.7%) chose also 'inspiring' as the essential characteristic of a young leader. Being 'inspiring' for a young leader was also very important for the Arabic speakers who are Australian born (73.8%).

According to the qualitative data, there are two characteristics that are essential for individuals to qualify as leaders:

- The need to 'prove yourself' (especially among African youth in Melbourne) and
- The need to 'give back' to your family and/or community
- The feeling of needing to 'prove yourself' re-appeared in the process of 'returning back' to the family or the community among some African youth:

*People have to see what you do. People have to see how you are fond of things. For those who came here with their parents, it's a different story. You have to prove to your parents, so that they trust what you're doing. If you have no parents, you have your community. And you have to prove yourself to the community. And the community, it has high expectations, especially the African community (African Focus Group, Melbourne).*

High expectations and difficulties that young people faced when they tried to re-connect with their families and communities do not reflect (only) the inflexibility of families or communities, but the fact that governments themselves do not recognise a circular dynamics of participation (from families to broader communities and back to the families or communities).

The challenges of 'giving back' to the community, because the community would not respond well or would not show interest, was expressed in particular by African youth in Melbourne and politically active Arabic-speaking youth in Brisbane and Melbourne.

*So you just feel more out of place, because you are meant to relate to them, but you go there and you can't relate. (Arabic-speaking Focus Group, Melbourne)*

*Because we came across this issue of the youth always saying, oh, we're never involved. We don't get anything. Blah, blah, blah. We tried to involve them. We tried to get them out there but they want you to give them, basically, a plate that has everything on it. They don't want to go and to the effort. That's what I think the mistake is and the issue is that you need more youth that actually want to get involved. If they don't want to get involved, just leave them. Because I really just had enough of that (Arabic-speaking Focus Group, Brisbane).*

SECTION 9.  
ACCESS TO SERVICES  
& NETWORK  
PARTICIPATION

# ACCESS TO SERVICES & NETWORK PARTICIPATION

According to the nation-wide ABS General Social Survey (2010), 30% of people aged 18 years and over felt that they are having difficulty accessing service providers. Three most frequently reported types of services that people had difficulty accessing were 1) telecommunication,

2) medical doctors and 3) Commonwealth income support, health and relates services, such as CentreLink, Medicare and the Family Assistance Office. See Table 10 for the details on these and other types of services that people reported difficulties in accessing.

*Table 10. Services that People Reported Difficulties in Accessing*

	TYPES OF SERVICES	HAD DIFFICULTY IN ACCESSING
1	TELECOMMUNICATIONS	11.1%
2	MEDICAL DOCTORS	9.9%
3	CENTRELINK, MEDICARE AND THE FAMILY ASSISTANCE OFFICE	9.1%
4	DENTISTS	7.7%
5	BANKS AND OTHER FINANCIAL SERVICES	6.1%
6	HOSPITALS	5.4%
7	EMPLOYMENT SERVICES	1.7%
8	LEGAL SERVICES	1.5%
9	MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES	1.4%
10	DISABILITY SERVICES	1.1%

Source: ABS General Social Survey 2010

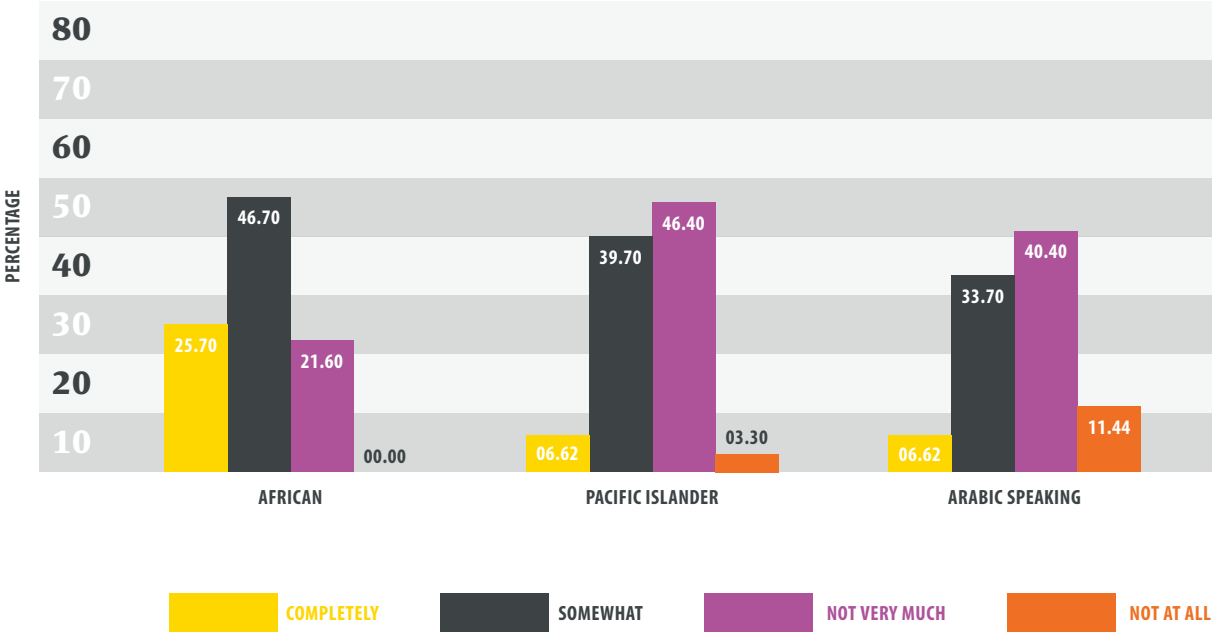
People in the smaller states and territories in Australia had even more difficulties accessing services. It was reported by 42.4% of people in the Northern Territory; 37.3% in Tasmania; 34.7% in the ACT; 33.6% in WA; 32.3% in Queensland; 28.8% in NSW and 28.3% in Victoria (ABS 2010).

Our survey asked the participants the following question: 'Can you tell me how much you trust service providers – multicultural, refugee, migrant centres, translation services, welfare agencies, etc.?' In relation to the question on 'trusting service providers', the overall experience was rather positive.

Among the three groups, some levels of distrust in service providers were reported by Pacific Island and Arabic-speakers while African youth generally expressed high levels of trust in

service providers (see Figure 20). Younger Arabic-speakers had the highest distrust in service providers. Distrust was also higher among Australian-born youth than it was among overseas-born.

Figure 20: Trust in service providers by participant group



The next survey question was as follows: ‘When you think about the different types of connections you have with people (e.g., family, friends, neighbours, groups and associations) do you get a specific service or help out of these connections?’ In response to this question, only a small number of respondents felt that their networks provided a specific service or help: with 18% among African young people who thought so. Relatively more Arabic-speakers (20.5%) and Pacific Island young people (24.5%) received a specific service or help through their networks. Within the African group there was no considerable difference in accessing a

specific service or help through networks in terms of the age (17.1% of 15-17 year olds and 17.9% of those who were 18 and over said that they had used their network for a specific service or help). In Pacific Island and Arabic-speaking groups these differences were more pronounced; 28.6% of 15-17 year old Pacific Island young people and 20% of those who were 18 and over said that they had used their network for a specific service or help and 16.9% of 15-17 year old Arabic-speakers and 22.8% of those that were 18 and over said that they had used their network for a specific service or help.

There was a difference between genders in all three groups in how much they thought that connections that they formed with people (their networks) can provide support or a specific help to them. Females were more likely to have received help in the African group (21.4% as compared to 14.5% of males) and in the Pacific Island group (29.7% as compared to 20.7% of males). In the Arabic-speaking group, however, it was males (25.3%) who were more likely to have received help than females (16.1%).

Accessing services decreased with time spent in Australia for Africans and Arabic-speakers, but not for Pacific Island young people. This means that more newly arrived (21.2%) and less long term settled African youth (15.5% of those who had lived in Australia for 6-10 years, and 13.3% of those who had lived in Australia for 11 or more years) have been accessing services through their networks. Equally, for the Arabic-speakers: 24.2% of newly arrived, 24% of those who had lived in Australia for 6-10 years, 23.8% of those who had lived in Australia for 11 or more years, and only 17.9% of those who were born in Australia have been accessing services through their networks. But this was different for the Pacific Island young people for whom longer period of settlement in Australia did not result in lower degrees of accessing services through networks. Those Pacific Island young people who accessed the services through networks the most were settled in Australia between 6 and 10 years (34.8%). In comparison to this number, 29.2% of newly arrived Pacific Island young people, and 29.3% of those who had lived in Australia for longer than that (11 or more years) accessed services through their networks. The percentage of those born in Australia who accessed services through networks was low at 15%.

There was a slight difference in respect to two religions within the Arabic-speaking group: 21.5% of Muslims and 18.5% of Christians had accessed a specific service or help through their networks.

In regards to barriers to participation, the survey included a question: 'What are the main things that stop me from getting involved in activities happening within my family/ethnic group and/or outside of my family/ethnic group?' The reasons for young people not participating in networks

varied, but in general these reasons were not linked to the lack of services that young people could access through networks. Barriers to their participation were mostly related to their lack of time ('being too busy'). A lack of transport was indicated as a barrier, but not to a large degree.

The interviews provided more material, which directly relates to barriers to the access of services and service providers for young people. According to this data, time constraints are often still a reason for why young people do not access services, but there are other reasons as well, such as location. Time constraints and location as barriers are related, because if services were positioned closer to where potential users of these services live, they would have needed less time would in accessing them. More services in critical geographical locations would therefore provide easier access to them.

Second, lacking information about services was mentioned as a barrier to accessing services in the interviews among some Arabic speakers and Pacific Island young people.

*The programs themselves are interesting, but it's the accessibility of programs that it's the problem. You hear about them... They should be a lot more out there. (Arabic speaking Focus Group, Melbourne)*

*No I'm not involved. And I'm not sure, because I don't even know if there is anything, like Polynesian community things ... Yeah, I don't know of any (Pacific Islander, Female, 18, Melbourne).*

Thirdly, the lack of cultural sensitivity also emerged as a barrier in the interviews. Across groups, young people mentioned the importance of cultural sensitivity or how important it is that services and people working through services understand the way they feel.

*I think it's more people [that are] not willing to listen. I'm gonna say this, I'm not sure if its proper to do so - in the human services field for example, you have a lot of people in it but they're not really in it for the people at the grass roots level, they're just in it to sort of show their own muscle and get their own little power trip. So that's one barrier. Office*



*politics. Speaking for other people - not myself - in terms of barriers, I think people not understanding that deep connection between children that are born here and their parents is not always a smooth one (Female, 24, Melbourne).*

*It's very hard if you meet someone from a completely different background to be able to understand the way your family treats you and things that I'm allowed to do and not allowed to do (Female, 24, Melbourne).*

Furthermore, relations within families substantially influence the ways young people are involved in networks and how they communicate with service providers. Misunderstandings and different ways of association cause migrant youth to experience difficulties in accommodating their own wishes and plans with the plans and wishes that their parents have for them. Intergenerational conflicts in migrant families have been challenging for youth as well as for youth service providers and further steps could be taken in establishing the ways of incorporation of families, especially parents, in the (outcomes of) some programs. This could be achieved in a dialogue and as a shared responsibility between young people and youth service providers. Challenges have been expressed most vocally by African youth in both cities and Arabic speaking youth in Brisbane, which means by those young people who have been born overseas, but have lived in Australia for some time.

*Mum doesn't really like it when I'm going to too many meetings, like AMARAH [Australian Muslim Advocates for the Rights of All Humanity] or whatever, she doesn't like that (Arabic speaker, Female, 21, Brisbane).*

*Yes, family can be an obstacle. We don't feel that, we are fortunate. But I don't find so much support from friends... They are like why do you care about other people so much? Worry about your own problems (Arabic-speaking Focus Group, Melbourne).*

*I think you also have to talk to your parents. You have to prove yourself at Uni, but you also have to talk to your parents. ... The best way to ensure them that what you're doing is actually beneficial is to invite them to the outcome.*

*And then there are so many ways you will be receiving something from them for all the work you've done. And they're sitting in the audience and the person announcing what you're doing and you know... this is to show our appreciation, to see that a lot of people from the community are behind you and are happy for you (African focus group, Melbourne).*

Nevertheless, persons who would be first on the list to talk to if young people experienced difficulties or if someone challenged their sense of belonging, are their parents or close friends. This was recorded across all groups and both cities.

*I would choose parent first or friend because parents are the important one, the first one who comes in your life. They're the one that helped you out through your life (Male, 17, Brisbane).*

*Definitely Mum and Dad. They're my first, very first preference because I trust them and anything that they say I've always took into consideration. Then next it would probably be my sister, even though she's two years younger, she's another personality on her own. Then probably my girlfriends and then after that probably just work mates or even my boyfriend (Female, 21, Brisbane).*

However, seeking help from parents did present some issues for young people. One interviewee in Melbourne, a female born in Australia to Lebanese parents, had some troubles in asking her mother for help or advice, because she felt her mum is not so 'open-minded':

*Yeah I do I have my friend's mum who is like another mum to me so I go to her for advice more than my mum cause she's more open-minded than my mum is. Umm, and I'd go to people at work... you know I got a few mothers there who are good to come to for advice (Arabic speaker, Female, 24, Melbourne).*

Some African young people who were interviewed came to Australia by themselves, without their parents, and therefore speaking to their parents about challenges in their day-to-day lives was not an option. These interviewees were all based in Melbourne.

*Friends. I go to Aussie family – sometimes I ask them. Sometimes I ask them, ‘What do you think?’ Sometimes I ask my case worker. Depends on which situation. My case worker from Step Ahead. But some situation I have to sort it out by myself. If I get confused I ask people, if I don’t get confused I sort it out myself (African, Female, 19, Melbourne).*

Other people who our respondents would turn for help include: church leaders or leaders in their mosque, community leaders (including youth leaders) and some members of community organisations. This was especially the case among African youth, where the sense of ‘community’ was, in general, the strongest.

# SECTION 10. SUMMARY & DISCUSSION

# SUMMARY & DISCUSSION

This Project explored the social networking activities of young people from African, Pacific Islander and Arabic-speaking backgrounds. Finding presented herein examine the extent to which social networks influence cultural identity, belonging and citizenship practices among young migrants. The project examines the ability of young people to create and engage in, a variety of social networks both within their own ethnic community group and beyond. Both the qualitative and quantitative data showed that migrant youth's social networks are culturally, linguistically and religiously diverse. Cross-cultural engagement was seen as desirable for several different reasons, such as establishing a feeling of belonging within the Australian context overcoming perceived homogeneity of some ethnic or cultural groups and countering cultural and religious stereotypes and discrimination. However, there are also strong reasons for migrant youth to be connected with their families and/or various communities. Their desire to participate in a broader multicultural space most often runs in parallel with their aspiration to participate in more local and culturally specific networks.

While migrant young people are generally eager to establish friendships across groups and often participate in already established culturally diverse groups in schools, universities or in the non-governmental sector, they also experience many challenges and barriers to participating in some networks. Inter-cultural tensions and experiences of racism affected young people's feelings of belonging and willingness to participate. The research found that for African and Arabic-speaking young people, direct experience of overt racism is the greatest single factor for social withdrawal. For Pacific Island young people, most experiences which lead to self-exclusion are related to collective stereotyping and more implicit forms of discrimination. Exposures to such experiences lead young people to sometimes withdraw socially or limit their social networks to family members or close friends.

## Comprehensive Family Approach

Project data show that, when it comes to participation in social groups and networks, young people in all three examined groups experience barriers linked to expectations within their families, especially parents. Project participants reported

having problems finding support or understanding from their parents for their network activities or involvements, especially when they were extra-curricular or did not directly relate to the measured educational outcomes. Some young people felt discouraged to be involved in ethno-specific groups and some thought that their parents did not fully understand the reasons for their involvement in culturally diverse groups. Experiences of barriers for young people are multiple and it is not possible to draw generalisations that would apply to specific groups. However, it can be said that African youth in Australia currently experience more challenges in inter-generational issues than the other two groups. The fact that most African young people in Australia are first generation in comparison to Arabic speakers and Pacific Island young people who are more mixed (first, second or even third generation) can provide some background to these outcomes. Inter-generational issues often surface more in the first generation.

In order for migrant youth's families, especially their parents, to be more informed about their interests and activities and to understand benefits and reasons for their involvement in out of school activities, some young people invited parents to see the outcomes: events, exhibitions, concerts etc. Both, young people and their parents, found this approach effective. With these simple acts, young people can contribute to better outcomes and make sure that later on they gain more support from their parents. Institutions which provide programs for youth and service providers assisting young people can also be more proactive in inter-generational solutions. Relationships that young people have with their parents and siblings importantly influence levels and frequencies of their participation and involvement in social groups and they also impact their strategies of involvement in social networks.

## Location of Services

Quantitative and qualitative data show that young people would like to network with others, especially cross-culturally. Engaging cross-culturally therefore is not seen as a barrier in itself despite the fact that everyday prejudicial behaviours were admitted to exist, especially in schools or public places. These prejudicial behaviours affect levels of engagement and desires of some young people to include or be included.

Most reported barriers to participation in the programs of service providers are primarily practical. Distance from services constitutes a bulk of reported reasons for young people's non-involvement in different programs. This is coupled with the lack of information about services. Qualitative data, especially interviews, show that location of services is the most commonly mentioned barrier to participation in the programmes of service providers. Quantitative data, on the other hand, reveals that the most important barrier to participation is the lack of time. Where services are located closer to where young people live, go to school, work or study, time constraint issues are lessened and there is more opportunity to participate. Young people tend to be more involved in groups and programs nearby their places of settlement, preferably their own neighbourhoods.

### **Increased Activities within Schools and Improved Cultural Diversity Training**

This study suggest that while in general young people tended not to have problems with teachers and other school staff, they still felt a constant need to 'prove themselves' in an environment where Australian values and ways of learning were prioritised and where there was not much opportunity to attend to their individual situations and needs arising from their migrant or refugee backgrounds. High school students from migrant backgrounds (the majority of high school students in the sample were enrolled in public state schools) would benefit from more culturally sensitive programs and generally more supportive school environment. To improve inclusion of CALD students within schools additional diversity training could be facilitated for staff and there could be more collaboration between schools, service providers and government agencies.

The study outcomes show a disparity of participation in school groups between Melbourne and Brisbane, with high participation of African, Arabic-speaking and Pacific Island students in school groups in Melbourne and a much lower participation of young people from the three groups in Brisbane. In Melbourne more than half of the participants in the sample have been active in a school-based group in the past year as opposed as less than a

third in Brisbane. Differences in state and independent school systems alongside some differences in funding and running of schools across the Australian states may have influenced this outcome. Survey participants were asked to indicate whether they went to school and what type of schools they went to, but they were not asked to indicate what programs and groups were on offer at their particular school. Therefore, we cannot attribute differences in their participation in school-based groups only to their experiences within their particular school environments or their individual decisions to participate, including their barriers to participation. However, it is notable that Pacific Island young people in Melbourne, who in qualitative interviews reported many instances of everyday exclusion in schools, had the lowest involvements in school-based groups in Melbourne. In Brisbane, the rates of non-participation vs. participation were relatively even across the groups.

### **Inclusion of Anglo - Australians within Networks**

While there were strong reasons for migrant youth to be connected with their families and/or various communities, their desire to participate in local and culturally specific networks often ran in parallel with their aspiration to participate in a broader multicultural space. The desire for youth groups to present to a wider audience the everyday realities of young people in urban multicultural Australia was voiced by members of all three groups who participated in the study in Melbourne and Brisbane. It is not uncommon for youth service provision to target specific youth groups, including ethno-specific groups or groups composed of non- English speaking backgrounds. These groups can also be formed according to a particular form of settlement, for instance young people who arrived in Australia as refugees. Often groups created by migrant youth naturally spring up because of the particular location of settlement, where many young people have a particular interest get involved in groups through in-group social networks, which in the first years of settlement more often tend to be ethno-specific. These decisions were questioned by some young people, who felt that by being labelled or perceived as 'migrant', 'refugee' or 'CALD' youth they are left to speak amongst themselves

instead of being encouraged to speak across groups in a mainstream society. As an alternative, groups targeted by the service providers can be organised around a specific interest, for instance a particular sport, music, leadership or mentorship interest area. Also, since some groups of young people in the study – particularly young Muslims and African’s informed by social justice and human rights discourse – focus on fighting racism or religious or racial profiling which they experience in everyday situations, the inclusion of Anglo-Australians is highly desirable as a means to counter stereotypes.

### **Increased Collaboration with Places of Worship and Existing Networks**

The data show that young people have a complex array of existing networks that facilitate their social activities. It is therefore important to acknowledge the spaces in which young people are already engaged and form collaborative relationships in order to accommodate more effective service delivery. An example of this kind of already formed and existing networking space which was evident within all three groups was the place of worship. Compared to other formal networks, religious groups had the highest rates of participation in the overall sample. Mosques and churches were described not only as places of worship but also places of learning and socializing.

There were, however, a few notable differences between and across groups. Participants in Brisbane appeared to be more actively involved in their respective places of worship. Differences in the number and/or availability of other services or different systems of settlement, as well as history of migrant settlement and organisation in the two states may have contributed to this outcome.

The places of worship and other pre-existing networks within the lives of young people are valuable resources for collaboration as these networks tend to remain constant despite other life changes.

### **Levels of Trust**

Overall, young people from the three groups tend to be trusting of other people. A recent report on attitudes of Australian people and social cohesion (Markus, 2011) has shown that the highest rates of negative attitudes are towards people of Middle-Eastern backgrounds in Australia (even though the majority still has positive views). These attitudes are mirrored by the trust levels among young Arabic-speakers in Australia. Amongst the three groups, trusting levels among young Arabic-speakers are the lowest, with survey data showing that more than a third of this group thinks that they can’t trust anyone. People from all three groups trust their family the most, but not necessarily their relatives. Comprehensive family approach adopted by service providers could again bring some positive outcomes here.



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ISBN: 978-0-646-90775-8

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