

REFUGEE VOICES: A JOURNEY TOWARDS RESETTLEMENT

OUR
STORY



Refugee resettlement research project

**Refugee Voices:
A Journey Towards Resettlement**

June 2004

Disclaimer

This report summarises data from an extensive research project on refugee resettlement in New Zealand. The variability of refugee flows arriving, including their particular circumstances and source countries, mean that these results are particular to the circumstances of the refugees interviewed. As such, there are a number of limitations applying to the data that are discussed in the section on methodology.

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Stephen Dunstan, Roz Dibley, Philippa Shorland

Stephen, the New Zealand Immigration Service Research and Evaluation Programme Manager, oversaw the research process and methods, from when the project was but a gleam in the eye, and contributed to the analysis and report writing.

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Philippa, a Research Analyst, assisted with the initial development of the project, worked on the analysis, and had primary responsibility for writing this final report.

FOREWORD

New Zealand has a long standing tradition of humanitarian assistance to the international community. Our refugee policy reflects the government's commitment to fulfilling its international humanitarian obligations and responsibilities. However, accepting refugees is not the end point of assistance.

Resettlement is never easy. As is borne out in this research, refugees face issues that make their resettlement experience very different from other migrants to New Zealand. To obtain refugee status, they have met the definition of a refugee, which means they have a well founded fear of being persecuted because of their race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or because of their political opinion. Many of these refugees arrive in New Zealand after having spent time in camps.

This research examined the experiences of three groups of refugees: those coming through the Refugee Quota, individuals who claimed asylum in New Zealand and were subsequently granted refugee status, and people from refugee backgrounds who entered New Zealand through standard family sponsored immigration policies. As such, *Refugee Voices* provides a comprehensive overview of refugee experiences in New Zealand.

The refugees interviewed were grateful for the opportunities that New Zealand has afforded them, especially the opportunity to live in a peaceful and pleasant country. Many were satisfied with their life in New Zealand. But the research also highlights that New Zealand needs to do more to assist refugees to play a meaningful part in our society. The issues that need to be addressed include those of English language proficiency, housing, adult education, discrimination, and employment. Particular difficulties for certain groups are also highlighted in the report.

Addressing these issues is a complex task, and the government cannot do it on its own. Integrating refugees into our communities is a challenge for all New Zealanders. To ease the pressures of resettlement, neighbours, schools, employers, ethnic groups, community organisations and government agencies, need to work together to help refugees acclimatise and adjust to this country.

To provide a framework to address settlement issues for migrants, refugees and their families, such as those raised in this report, the government recently announced a national Immigration Settlement Strategy. Six goals have been established and these will be used to guide the development of settlement initiatives. These six goals are also a benchmark to assess how well we are assisting migrants and refugees to settle and participate.

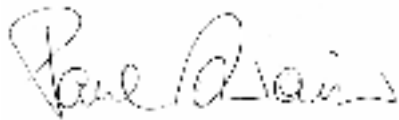
The initial focus of the national Immigration Settlement Strategy is to improve the way career and labour market information is tailored to the needs of refugees and migrants, to provide extra funding for adult English language tuition, to increase English language resources in schools, and to improve resourcing for the assessment of refugee qualifications. The establishment of a national network of migrant

resource services will provide a point of contact for providing information to refugees and migrants.

Additional core funding has been given to the Refugee and Migrant Service, to assist with the resettlement of refugees, so we can ensure that refugees continue to have quality services and assistance provided to them. In total, the 2004 Budget increased funding for all these initiatives by \$62.39 million between 2004/05 and 2007/08.

Other settlement initiatives recently undertaken include funding for the Language Line, an interpreting service offering 35 different languages for clients of certain government agencies (\$1.266 million for 2004/05), and funding to provide ongoing employment services for refugees and migrants (\$21 million over four years to the Ministry of Social Development).

Resettlement is an ongoing process. Good research, such as *Refugee Voices*, is necessary to assist with understanding the issues faced by refugees and to underpin the development of the Immigration Settlement Strategy. The commitment of all stakeholders, including the government, the broad range of agencies involved, the wider community, and the various ethnic communities is required. Together we can assist with alleviating problems and assist refugees to participate to the fullest extent possible in the life of their new country.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Paul Swain". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "P".

Hon Paul Swain
Minister of Immigration

IF I COULD

Yilma Tafere Tasew (“Agonising Wounds”)

For African Refugees
June 1995, Kakuma Refugee Camp, Kenya

Please don't ask me
‘Why don't you go back?’
Do you think I like staying for 12 beans
Or two weeks rationing?
Wishing to stay without soap
Suffering with malaria, typhoid
Here in the bush
Where nature is playing its ugliest games

Where?
Wind, dust-blowing trumpet
Do you think I like staying?
Seeking for second-hand clothes
While I can help myself
While I can build my homeland
Do you think my shoulder has carried
Rather than a fountain, a head, a human brain
Which can't think far

Do you think I like staying?
Without my wife, husband, children
My father, mother, sister, brother, family
Without feeling homesick?
Please! Don't ask me!
‘Why don't you go back?’

Problems of our stupid century
While wild animals living in harmony
Human kind are destroying each other
Where human sense lost its value
War, tribal, religious conflicts
Destroy peace, democracy

Where there is war, where there is conflict
Where I am afraid of persecution
Where there is no democracy
Where human rights are violated
I can't go back
Until then I am destined to suffer in exile
Until I go back, until my time comes
Until then I will stay

Please don't ask me
'Why don't you go back?'
I would if I could
The world humanitarian community
Understand that it is not simple, easy
To avoid past memories
I can't remove them from my mind
My traditional culture, my sentimental torture
The folktales of childhood
Never old, never dead
Stamped in the back of my mind

Growing up in time
In real life, wholesome
The soft whispers of past
Which is deep in my heart
Can't be eliminated
The whispers of the past
Always there in the mind
Always whispering loudly
Reminding me my homeland
Putting me in homesickness
In a pain without treatments
In a foreign land for refugees
Carrying the air for homelands
Heavy burdens

The past whispers
Please! Don't kill my broken heart
By asking me
'Why don't you go back?'
I would if I could
Do you think with all these
And other feelings of mine
I wish to stay in exile?
Drinking the drops of death
Every day from the cup
Piece by piece within a pool
No! No! No! No!

I am a refugee
A strong human being
Who is crushed, suffered
Who have normal feeling
Who suffer for dignity
Wishing death proudly

Please! Don't kill my broken heart
By asking me
'Why don't you go back?'
I will if I could
I wouldn't stay a moment
When the new dawn comes for me
Alas! Even if you beg me
I would go in a moment
When I could
I would if I could

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. INTRODUCTION

Introduction and background

Refugee Voices reports the findings of a Department of Labour (DoL) research project that inquired into the resettlement experiences of refugees in New Zealand.¹ The information will be used to assess and improve refugee support systems and assist with the development of refugee resettlement policy. This report is available from libraries throughout New Zealand and also from the following web-site: www.immigration.govt.nz. A summary report is also available.

The 398 refugees who were interviewed for this research fell into two groups. The first group, *recently arrived* refugees, consisted of Quota, Convention and Family Reunion refugees who were interviewed after six months in New Zealand (209 people) and then again at two years (162 people). The second group, *established* refugees, included Quota refugees who had been in New Zealand for around five years (189 people).

Quota refugees are people whom the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has mandated as refugees offshore. These people are selected for resettlement to New Zealand under the annual Refugee Quota Programme. The annual Quota comprises three main sub-categories: protection cases; women-at-risk; and medical/disabled. Convention refugees are former asylum seekers whose refugee status has been recognised in New Zealand by domestic authorities. Family Reunion refugees have been sponsored by refugee family members already residing in New Zealand.

New Zealand's refugee policy reflects the government's commitment to fulfilling its international humanitarian obligations and responsibilities under the United Nations 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees.

A refugee is defined as:

“ . . . a person who, owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country.” (UNHCR, 1951 and 1967)

New Zealand resettles an average of 750 Quota refugees per annum referred by the UNHCR, and an additional 200 to 500 Convention refugees per annum. Between 1980 and 2002, 16,556 refugees and displaced persons were resettled under the Refugee Quota Programme. The geographic mix of source countries for New Zealand's refugee intake has shifted over the past 25 years in response to changing global circumstances and humanitarian needs. The top five source countries for

¹ The project was managed by the New Zealand Immigration Service (NZIS), a service of the Department of Labour.

Quota refugees coming to New Zealand in recent years are Iraq, Somalia, Ethiopia, Afghanistan, and Burma/Myanmar. For Convention refugees, the top five source countries are Iran, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, Somalia and Iraq.

Having arrived in New Zealand, the geographic spread of refugees tends to follow the national pattern of population concentrations, with the major urban regions being the main areas of refugee resettlement. A high proportion is located in Auckland.

Objectives and methodology

Participatory research principles guided the project and resulted in the recruitment of research associates from refugee communities who trained as research assistants and interviewers. The research associates had a deep understanding of the cultures of the people they interviewed and were able to build trusting relationships with them. An Advisory Group provided input into the design of the research.

The objective was to describe refugees' resettlement experiences over a broad range of areas including their backgrounds, the information they had about New Zealand prior to arrival, their arrival experiences, housing, getting help, family reunification, health, learning English, adult education, labour force and other activities, financial support, children and teenagers, social networks, discrimination, cultural integration and settling in New Zealand.

The sampling frame was the DoL's immigration database, limited to refugees living in Auckland, Hamilton, Wellington and Christchurch, selected to balance gender, nationality, age and family size. Within each stratum, refugees were randomly selected from those aged 13 years and over. The interview instrument was a paper-based questionnaire with both open-ended and closed-ended questions. Vulnerability of participants and a lack of expertise in the mental health area meant that questions were not asked about mental health or about the specific circumstances that led the participants to become refugees.

Face-to-face interviews were carried out in the participants' own languages, which included languages such as Arabic, Assyrian, Kurdish, Tamil, Somali, Farsi, Burmese and Dari. The interviews were supplemented with material from focus groups that were carried out with men, women, teenagers, Burmese refugees resettling in Nelson, and refugee service providers.

2. BACKGROUND

Refugee backgrounds

The refugees interviewed came from diverse backgrounds, with a range of skills and cultural traditions that impacted on their resettlement experiences. In their former countries they had experienced (sometimes extended) periods of civil unrest that threatened their safety and resulted in a lack of adequate food and water, and health and educational resources.

A number of the research participants, mostly Quota refugees, had spent time (in some cases, more than 16 years) in refugee camps before coming to New Zealand.

Most had access to some services such as healthcare, education and training, although others lacked access to anything beyond basic humanitarian aid.

The refugees spoke a variety of languages and dialects. One third of *recently arrived* refugees could speak two languages well, and a further third could speak three or more languages well. Ten percent could not read and/or write any language. Overall, Convention refugees were able to read and write more languages than Quota or Family Reunion refugees. While the range of languages will change year by year depending on the nationality of refugees, there can be little doubt that New Zealand is increasing its linguistic diversity.

Most refugees had completed some education before coming to New Zealand, although a number of Quota refugees had no prior formal education. Convention refugees had completed a higher level of education and a higher proportion had work experience. Female refugees had spent less time in education than males. Just over one half of *recently arrived* refugees and eight in ten *established* refugees had no formal qualifications prior to coming to New Zealand.

More than half of both refugee groups had some prior work experience. For *recently arrived* refugees, this was mainly in a trade, profession or service and sales occupation (such as a shop assistant). *Established* refugees had often previously worked in sales and service occupations or a trade. In the 12 months before arriving in New Zealand, 40 percent of *recently arrived* refugees were working, 21 percent were looking after children at home and 19 percent were studying. Others were in refugee camps, at home without children, working without pay, or looking for work.

Prior information about New Zealand

Many of the refugees knew little about New Zealand prior to arrival, in particular Convention refugees (ex-asylum seekers) who often arranged to come through an intermediary and had little input into arrangements for their relocation. Family Reunion refugees were the most informed, by their family in New Zealand, although a high proportion still did not know much about the country prior to arrival. Refugees' expectations and their perceptions of whether these had been met were mixed – many had expected to find work and had not, and many had expected to find a safe and peaceful country and felt they had.

Arrival experiences

The different refugee types follow different processes on arrival in New Zealand. Quota refugees are the most supported, spending six weeks at the DoL's Mangere Refugee Reception Centre (Mangere) in Auckland. Eighty-seven percent of the Quota refugees interviewed felt that their time at Mangere had prepared them well, and many commented particularly on the English language classes and health checks. Some, however, felt the programme could be longer and a substantial number were dissatisfied with the food as it was very different to their regular diet.

Convention refugees have their status determined by the Refugee Status Branch of the DoL's Immigration Service (or, if initially unsuccessful, they can appeal to the Refugee Status Appeals Authority). The Convention refugees interviewed were generally positive about the process, although about half felt the process took too long. The time before an initial determination has recently been greatly shortened, from two or three years, to three months.

Family Reunion refugees come to New Zealand through family sponsored immigration policies and often family members handle the application process for them. Many of those interviewed felt the application process took too long, and a number felt it was too costly. It is difficult for many refugees to provide the necessary documentation for residence.

3. SETTLEMENT

Housing

The initial priority for refugees upon arrival in New Zealand is access to affordable and good quality housing. More than a third of the refugees interviewed had problems finding suitable housing, mainly due to cost. A number discussed difficulties due to a lack of English language ability and problems finding large enough houses. Participants, particularly Quota refugees, were found to be living with a substantially higher number of people per bedroom than the New Zealand average. This raises the issue of overcrowding and associated health risks.

Refugees had three key concerns when assessing the appropriateness of housing: cost, location and cultural appropriateness. Refugees often have families that are larger than the New Zealand average and so the size of dwellings is important. The majority of refugees interviewed were living in rental accommodation – Housing New Zealand Corporation (HNZC) houses were generally preferred because the rent is income-related. While Quota refugees receive assistance from the Refugee and Migrant Service (RMS) and HNZC, Convention refugees are expected to find their own housing (although emergency accommodation is available through the Auckland Refugee Council).

Family Reunion refugees rely on their sponsors (who are close family), who have been required to ensure accommodation for the first 24 months. *Recently arrived* Quota refugees paid the least rent – an average per household of \$105 per week as a number were living in subsidised HNZC houses. Family Reunion refugees paid an average per household of \$203 per week and Convention refugees paid \$216. *Established* refugees paid an average of \$162 per week. Most of those paying over \$200 per week lived in Auckland.

Discrimination was found to be an issue for some refugees, who felt they had more success securing accommodation when they viewed the house with a ‘Kiwi’ companion. This was confirmed by service providers who also noted the difficulty in locating culturally appropriate housing.

Recently arrived Quota refugees had moved the least and, at six months, one half were still living in the house they moved to after leaving Mangere. There was sometimes a feeling of obligation to those who assisted them to find their house to stay in the house that was initially found for them. Convention refugees had moved the most, which can be partly explained by them having been in New Zealand for longer than other participants. Also, a number were in New Zealand alone and therefore more mobile than those living with family members.

Despite receiving the most assistance with finding housing, Quota refugees were the most dissatisfied, mainly due to the size and condition of their houses. Quota refugees had less choice about where they initially lived (since their houses were found for them). They also tended to live in households with more people than other participants, and their houses were often too small for their families. Convention refugees were the most satisfied with their housing.

Getting help

The four main areas *recently arrived* refugees needed help or information at six months were with income support, health services, education and training, and local services. More than half who needed help with finding work did not get this help. Thirty-nine percent of *established* refugees said they still needed help to settle in New Zealand, with their main concern being family reunification. *Established* refugees still needed help with English language training, financial support and finding work.

Service providers who took part in focus groups felt many refugees lacked an understanding of how to access services and their entitlements. A focus group of Burmese refugees living in Nelson stressed the importance of having a dedicated person who can provide information and support.

There was notable variation in the need for ongoing settlement support by region of origin. Of the *recently arrived* refugees, a large proportion from the Middle East, the Horn of Africa and South East Asia, said they still needed help to settle in New Zealand at two years, but relatively few participants from South Asia (Sri Lanka) said they still needed help. These South Asian participants also had good English language skills and were more likely to be in work.

Ethnic community groups were a good source of support for many refugees. Of the *recently arrived* refugees interviewed at six months, half of those from the Middle East and the Horn of Africa, a third from South Asia, and all those from South East Asia said they received support from their ethnic group. Of the *established* refugees, 65 percent said members of their ethnic group had provided them with resettlement help. As with *recently arrived* refugees, less South Asians said they received this support.

The RMS provided most of the initial support for Quota refugees when they first arrived in New Zealand, while family was an important support mechanism for Family Reunion refugees. Convention refugees relied more on friends and government agencies for help.

Family reunification

Research participants were asked about their experiences with, or intentions of, sponsoring family to New Zealand, including any barriers or difficulties they faced. For many, reunification is of primary importance, and the task of sponsoring family was seen to be both difficult and costly. Most participants had family members living overseas, often extended family such as siblings, parents and in-laws. It is important to note that many extended family members, as described by participants, would not be eligible for residence under current family sponsored immigration policy.

Changes were made to the criteria for residence under the Family Category in October 2001, including expanding the definitions of dependent children, adult children and siblings, and parents, to recognise a wider range of family structures. The changes increased the sponsors' legal obligation to take responsibility for family members. The Humanitarian Category was closed and a new balloted Refugee Family Quota Category was created for refugee-linked applicants who do not qualify under the Refugee Quota or standard Family Category. It was introduced in July 2002 and is set annually. The number of places available in 2003/04 was 300.

Participants indicated a diverse range of people that it was important for them to have in New Zealand. For most, the concept of family included, but extended beyond, the nuclear family (including spouse and/or children). When asked why family reunification was important many participants considered the reasons to be self-evident. Common responses were "because they are my family" or "because they are a very important part of my life" or "because I want to be with them".

Seventy-four *established* refugees had tried to sponsor family to New Zealand and just over half of these individuals had been successful with their applications. The most common reason for applications being unsuccessful was that their application was incomplete (in some cases due to difficulties locating documentation), or that they did not meet the criteria. Most *recently arrived* refugees would not have been in New Zealand for long enough to sponsor family to New Zealand.

Of the *recently arrived* refugees, 73 percent at six months and 53 percent at two years said they were intending to sponsor family members to New Zealand in the future. Of the *established* refugees, 61 percent indicated they still were intending to sponsor family members. Some wanted to sponsor family members but felt they were not able to do so, mainly due to the cost (which includes not only the application fee, but costs associated with airfares and needing to initially support the family on arrival) or a lack of understanding of the family sponsored immigration policy and process. Many research participants said they lacked an understanding of the October 2001 immigration policy changes, including why the Humanitarian Category was closed.

Eighty-four percent of *recently arrived* refugees and 88 percent of *established* refugees maintained contact with their families overseas. *Established* refugees were asked if they expected to return or visit their home countries and 65 percent indicated that they did, although more than half did not know when.

Health

Access to healthcare is an important aspect of the resettlement process. Some refugees have not had access to comprehensive healthcare for some time and many are suffering physical and/or psychological effects due to their experience. Refugees are eligible for a Community Services Card and have access to some refugee-specific community education and health programmes funded by the government, as well as community liaison staff and co-ordinators that assist refugees with gaining access to health services.

When interviewed at six months, and two years, about half of *recently arrived* refugees rated their health as excellent or very good, about a third as good and the remainder poor. In general, participants rated their health as better after six months

than they did on arrival, although 16 percent (mostly women) said their health was worse. Forty-one percent of *established* refugees said their health was better at five years, while 19 percent said their health was worse. Common reasons for worse health were having developed a medical condition such as asthma, concern for family overseas and emotional stress.

The most common reasons *recently arrived* refugees gave for improvements to their health were feeling safe and secure and having less stress in their lives. *Established* refugees gave similar reasons for improved health, including access to good healthcare and feeling safe.

The *medical/disabled* category for Quota refugees allows entry for those who either have a medical condition that can be treated or helped in New Zealand or a disability that requires support. Thirty-three *recently arrived* refugees at two years indicated a long term medical problem, including 23 who had the problem prior to coming to New Zealand and 10 who developed the problem in New Zealand. Many noted the impact on their ability to work or carry out daily activities.

Although mental health was deemed too sensitive an issue to include within the scope of this research, a number of service providers who took part in focus groups felt this was an area of serious concern. Wellington providers noted an increase in the need for emergency psychiatric teams to work with refugees. One third of *recently arrived* refugees at six months said they had experienced emotional problems since coming to New Zealand. Convention refugees were most likely to report these problems. At two years, 12 percent of all participants said they had experienced emotional problems in the past 12 months. Just over half of these people sought help, mainly from a medical professional, psychiatrist or specialist, although some sought help from their families or community.

Nearly all participants had registered with a general practitioner (GP) and, at two years, almost three-quarters had visited their doctor in the past 12 months. Most were satisfied with the service. For those who had problems accessing a doctor, the most common reason was cost, followed by appointments not being available. Almost one quarter of *recently arrived* refugees interviewed at two years had used services at, or been admitted to, a hospital in the past 12 months. More than one half of *established* refugees had visited a hospital since arrival. Most said they received an appropriate, good or excellent service. Common complaints related to waiting lists and times and some were dissatisfied with the treatment they had received or were prescribed. Most participants were aware of their entitlement to an interpreter at hospitals, and those who used this service were generally very satisfied.

Overall impressions of healthcare in New Zealand were very good, with particular emphasis on the service, caring and kind staff, low prescription costs, and the check-ups and follow-ups.

At six months, one half of the participants said their children's health was better than when they arrived and attributed this to a better diet, better access to healthcare and a good environment. Thirteen percent said their children's health was worse due to either the development of a medical condition or the change in climate. At two and five years, most participants had arranged for their children to be immunised. Most

parents were happy with the health services provided for their children. Those who had experienced problems were dissatisfied with waiting times.

4. TRAINING, WORK AND INCOME

Learning English

Proficiency in English language is critical to both the economic well-being and social integration of refugees. The diversity of refugees, and their often unique set of characteristics, means there needs to be a variety of learning options available to them on arrival.

Quota refugees are provided with English language tuition at Mangere and are eligible for further training through Training Opportunities courses run by the Tertiary Education Commission.² Until their refugee status is confirmed, Convention refugees must fund their own English language learning. Once their status is confirmed they can access Training Opportunities courses if they are registered with the Ministry of Social Development's Work and Income (W&I). Family Reunion refugees can also access English language training if they are registered with W&I and can demonstrate low qualifications and language barriers to entering employment. The ESOL Home Tutor Service provides English language tutors free of charge.

Two thirds of *recently arrived* refugees had learnt some English language before coming to New Zealand, although only 17 percent said they could speak English well on arrival. Convention refugees tended to have better English language ability on arrival than other refugees. At two years, 43 percent of *recently arrived* refugees said they could speak English well, 26 percent fairly well and 32 percent not well. At two years three-quarters of Convention refugees said they could speak English well or very well and none rated their spoken English as poor.

Quota refugees rated their English language ability the lowest, with 46 percent saying they could not speak English well at two years. This compares to 28 percent of Family Reunion refugees who could not speak English well at two years. Twice as many men than women could speak English well on arrival and this gender difference persisted at two years. At two years, 52 percent of men said they could speak English well compared with a low 32 percent of women.

Three quarters of *established* refugees said they could not speak English well on arrival. After five years, 50 percent of *established* refugees could speak English well, although 27 percent indicated they still could not speak English well. Nearly eight in ten *established* refugees were not able to write in the English language on arrival. At five years, four out of ten could write English well.

The main reason cited for improvement in spoken English was daily contact with English language speakers, including via the media. Written language improved through courses, school or study. Those who said they learnt English using more than one method were asked which method they found the most useful. At six months, one quarter said the most useful way to learn English was at an educational institution

² Training Opportunities is funded by Work and Income and administered by the Tertiary Education Commission.

such as a school, university or polytechnic. A smaller number cited community courses or Training Opportunities courses. Twelve percent of refugees at two years said the most useful way to learn English was at work, 11 percent cited the media and 10 percent said conversations with family and friends. For those who had paid for English language courses, the main source of financial assistance was W&I. Other sources were student and personal loans or from sponsors.

More women than men had problems accessing English language training mostly due to a lack of childcare, problems with transport or not being allowed out alone. Overall, problems trying to learn English were attributed to not knowing how to access classes, cost, transportation difficulties and health problems. Focus group participants suggested that text books in both the refugee's native language and English would help. Reasons for wanting to improve English language skills were primarily to get a job, to deal with everyday life, to undertake further education, and to communicate and socialise.

Many participants had needed help with interpretation and/or translation at some point, particularly in situations such as visiting W&I, going to the doctor or hospital, shopping or banking, or undertaking immigration procedures. As would be expected, the need for an interpreter decreased over time. Most participants felt they received the help they needed. Those who did not said the main reason was not knowing how to access interpreting assistance. Service providers in Auckland and Wellington expressed concern about the lack of interpreters available free of charge. Many participants had used a family member (often their children) or a friend to interpret or translate, and a number had used a professional.

Adult education

The education needs of refugees extend beyond English language into general study or training which will help them to access work. The refugees interviewed on this topic were over 17 years of age. Participants were asked to exclude English language study. However, during analysis it was found that some were referring to English study and therefore the findings need to be treated with caution.

At both six months and two years, a higher proportion of refugees between the ages of 17 and 24 years had completed study or training than other age groups. Only a small number of participants over the age of 40 years had taken part in study or training. Family Reunion refugees were the least likely to have done study or training.

Seventy-two *established* refugees had taken part in study or training in New Zealand. The main type of study was at secondary school. Other types of study included courses in computer studies, nursing, science, business, hairdressing, interpreting and carpentry. A number of participants encountered difficulties accessing study or training, mostly due to English language ability, health issues, cost or access to childcare. Family Reunion refugees were slightly more likely than other participants to report difficulties.

A number of refugees had applied for student loans. Those who had been in New Zealand longer were more likely to have had a loan approved. Those who experienced difficulties getting a loan said they lacked information about the process, or had not lived in New Zealand long enough to claim entitlement.

Labour force and other activities

Employment is a means of integration and a key indicator of resettlement. Refugees' backgrounds can sometimes place limitations on their ability to enter the workforce due to a lack of work experience, a lack of qualifications, and/or limited English language. Other barriers are employers' lack of understanding of other cultures, racism and discrimination.

Convention refugees, having spent more time in education, having more work experience and better English language ability, and having had access to a work permit as asylum seekers, were more likely to have found work than Quota or Family Reunion refugees.

As could be expected, employment rates were low for all participants – 16 percent of *recently arrived* refugees aged between 15 and 65 years, were working at six months, as were 26 percent at two years. Twenty-nine percent of *established* refugees were working. At six months, half of the 30 *recently arrived* refugees employed were working part-time and half were working full-time, while at two years more than twice as many refugees were working part-time as were working full-time. Of the 49 *established* refugees who were working, 19 were working part-time and 30 were working full-time. More participants said they had worked at some stage in New Zealand than were working at each interview, indicating a higher proportion of participants had got work, although not necessarily sustainable employment.

At both interviews, a substantial proportion of refugees were involved in activities outside of the labour force, especially women. Participants from South Asia had the highest labour force activity rate and, as noted earlier, they had the highest English language capability.

Of those who had looked for work, seven out of ten *recently arrived* refugees and the same proportion of *established* refugees had experienced difficulties. The main problem related to a lack of English language ability. *Established* refugees discussed negative responses and discrimination from employers, such as often being told that recently advertised jobs had been taken. More than half of those refugees who were working had found their job through family, friends or community contacts. A number said their improved English language had helped them secure their job. The most common occupations were in service and sales followed by elementary occupations, such as labouring.

Most refugees who were currently employed were working in a different occupation to that they had held in their home country. More than half were satisfied with their job and said that they liked their fellow employees, the pay rate and the opportunity to extend their English language skills. Those who were dissatisfied did not like the low pay, not having a career path and/or the lack of job satisfaction.

Refugees who were looking for work nominated a wide range of fields including: factory work, supermarket work, cleaning or kitchen-hand work; or more specialised jobs such as a teacher, jeweller, IT worker, car salesperson, food technologist and dental assistant. A number of people said they would take any paid work available. The most common methods of looking for work were through personal contacts and job advertisements.

A small number of refugees had taken part in voluntary work in order to assist their community, gain work experience, or meet people. Others were occupied with study or looking after children. Quota refugees were the most likely to be studying (at both interviews), and Family Reunion refugees the least likely to be studying. Women were more likely than men to be at home with children.

Financial support and income

When Quota refugees first arrive in New Zealand they are eligible to receive an emergency unemployment benefit at the same rate as that provided to other unemployed New Zealanders. They are also provided with a special grant to cover re-establishment costs. Family sponsored immigration policy requires the New Zealand sponsor to support the sponsored person for two years, although emergency benefits are available to Family Reunion refugees if their sponsor is a former refugee. Asylum seekers whose claims have not yet been determined can apply for a work permit. Convention refugees may apply for an emergency unemployment benefit.

The participants were asked about their income sources and their experiences receiving a government benefit or earning a salary or wage. The main source of income for 89 percent of *recently arrived* refugees at both interviews was a government benefit, however 58 percent of Convention refugees at six months had received a salary or wage since arriving in New Zealand and, at two years, 50 percent had received a salary or wage in the past two weeks. At two years, the main source of income for 89 percent of *recently arrived* refugees was a government benefit, while 8 percent depended on a salary or wage. Four Convention refugees were self-employed. The main source of income for 78 percent of *established* refugees was a government benefit, while 19 percent relied on a salary or wage. Many participants supplemented their wage with a government benefit.

Nearly all participants were earning a salary or wage of less than \$30,000, many less than \$10,000. Low income levels account for the number of participants who received a benefit as well as a salary or wage. Service providers who took part in focus groups suggested that a benefit could sometimes be a barrier to employment. The difference between the amount received on a benefit and wages from working are often small, especially when costs for large families are taken into account. Service providers also felt that some refugees were unaware of their full entitlements from W&I.

Of the *recently arrived* refugees, 13 percent of those interviewed at six months and 6 percent at two years sent money to family overseas. Just over a quarter of *established* refugees regularly sent money overseas. It is possible that refugees under-reported sending money as they would not want to create the impression that they had extra income. Amounts sent overseas ranged from \$20 per month to \$8000 per annum.

Two thirds of *recently arrived* refugees interviewed at six months felt they did not have enough money to meet their needs. At two years this number fell to just over one half. Many felt the cost of living was expensive, especially for those supporting children. Half of the *established* refugees interviewed felt they did not have sufficient money. A number of these people were providing for family both in New Zealand and overseas.

5. SOCIAL INTEGRATION

Children and teenagers

Many children and teenagers who come to New Zealand as refugees have spent time in refugee camps and know little about their own country, like the Somali teenagers brought up in a refugee camp in Kenya who took part in this research. School is a major part of children and teenagers' lives and can be an important settling factor as well as a difficult experience for young refugees. Teenage refugees experience more pressures than other children their age. They experience peer pressure at school, and may also be struggling with the expectations of their parents and elders to carry out activities in a traditional manner. Teenage refugees are often required to interpret and translate for their parents.

Only one child was reported not to be attending school because he did not like it and his language skills were poor. Several children had changed schools since arriving in New Zealand, mostly due to movement of the family, but in some cases for religious reasons or due to discrimination. A small number of children were reported to have had trouble settling into school due to their lack of English language, difficulties making friends, or feeling 'different'. A good school, kind teachers and help with English language were said to assist the settling process.

More than half of the children received extra help with English through ESOL classes, individual teaching assistance or after-school classes. A small number also reported receiving help from the school with homework or other subjects.

At six months, 89 percent of participants were satisfied with their children's schooling, as were 83 percent at two years. Ninety percent of *established* refugees said they were satisfied with their children's schooling.

Around three quarters of children were involved in activities outside of school, mainly sports but also music, drama, and arts and crafts. Those who were not so involved said the children had just started school, or that cost and/or transport was a barrier.

Particular difficulties for girls, discussed by parents, related to cultural and religious factors. The way girls were required to dress (such as wearing a head scarf or veil) often attracted unwanted attention from others and meant that a school uniform might not be culturally appropriate. Another issue related to socialising being difficult for girls from some cultures, particularly around mixing with boys. Some parents referred to girls in New Zealand having much more freedom and they found it difficult when their daughters wanted this same level of freedom.

A smaller number of parents felt there were difficulties for boys in New Zealand. These mostly related to cultural differences. Some parents said their sons found it very difficult balancing their own culture and the New Zealand culture.

Many of the teenagers who were interviewed noted differences in growing up in New Zealand, compared to what they had previously experienced. The main difference was the level of freedom, but they also cited educational opportunities and that their own cultures had more respect for teachers and parents. They generally liked going to school, taking part in leisure activities, having friends, and the freedom and

opportunities available. Only a small number said they had dislikes, including their peers' lack of respect for adults, the co-educational system, and some New Zealand teenagers' behaviour. *Established* refugees most common dislike was discrimination.

Nearly all of the teenagers interviewed said that school had become easier over time, due to improvements in their English language, making friends, gaining confidence and good teachers. For *recently arrived* teenagers interviewed at six months, the main difficulty with school was language and communication.

In focus group discussions, many teenagers mentioned they liked having the opportunity to make friends at a multi-cultural school. Interestingly, several said they found it easier to make friends with non-Pakeha students.

Most of the teenagers felt it had been easier for them to settle than their parents, and many were required to assist their parents with resettlement. Of the 27 teenagers who responded to the question at six months, 16 said they had interpreted or translated for their parents. Fourteen had provided other help, mainly with household chores, including shopping and looking after younger children.

When asked what advice they might give to other teenagers coming to New Zealand, the most popular response was to study hard and to make the most of school. Burmese, Somali and Afghan teenagers who took part in focus groups all felt it was important to maintain their culture in New Zealand.

Social networks

Social networks can help refugees combat the various problems they face during resettlement. *Recently arrived* refugees at six months were asked how important it was for them to make friends in New Zealand. Eighty-two percent felt it was important or very important. Refugees who did not think it was important to make friends, or who felt it was neither important nor unimportant, gave similar reasons – a number did not know why they felt this way, while others said they had their families or they already had friends. Others commented that they were too busy to make friends.

When *recently arrived* refugees at six months who had made friends in New Zealand were asked how they had met these people, 61 percent referred to the importance of existing friends, relatives and neighbours. Those who had difficulty making friends cited language problems and cultural differences.

Just under one half of refugees interviewed at two years and five years felt it had been easy to make friends outside their ethnic group. Improved English language ability was a major factor, and many also said that New Zealand people were friendly and approachable. There was less interest expressed in joining clubs and groups, although some participants did not understand this question. It is also important to consider cultural background, as in some cultures joining clubs and groups is considered elitist. English language ability was a factor in the ease or difficulty of joining groups or clubs. Those who belonged to clubs were mainly members of sports clubs, ethnic associations or religious groups.

Discrimination

Focus groups found that refugees in New Zealand were often the target of racism or discrimination fuelled by ignorance and a lack of understanding about the issues facing refugees. Aspects of discrimination arose throughout the research including with housing, children and teenagers, around entering the labour force and with other activities. It was felt women in particular could be discriminated against because of the way they dressed. Research associates and service providers commented that refugees often experienced discrimination from landlords.

When asked if they had experienced discrimination because of their ethnic group, 14 out of 207 participants interviewed at six months felt they had. Of those who had experienced discrimination, seven were from the Middle East, six were from the Horn of Africa and one was from South Asia. At two years, seven participants felt they had been discriminated against in the past month, four from the Middle East and three from the Horn of Africa. Of 186 *established* refugees, 14 said they had experienced discrimination in the last month, seven of whom were from the Middle East and seven from the Horn of Africa. There are a number of reasons participants may under-report discrimination. Because the situation in New Zealand is much better than it was in their former countries, participants may not want to report discrimination or may feel that it is not occurring.

Discrimination was also reported when looking for work, at W&I, at school and while doing other study. Other incidents noted were abuse by members of the public or neighbours. Those who sought help with discrimination went to a range of people including friends, the Police, the Race Relations Conciliator and staff at Refugees as Survivors.

Learning about New Zealand culture and maintenance of own culture

Refugees in New Zealand have come to a country with a unique history based on its bi-cultural background. An understanding of this history provides refugees with a better understanding of New Zealand society as a whole. At the same time, refugees' own culture and cultural identity are very important.

Recently arrived refugees interviewed at six months were asked what they knew about the Treaty of Waitangi and the place of Maori in New Zealand society. Many participants lacked an understanding of these issues. At two years, half of this group had some knowledge of these issues. Just under half of *established* refugees said they had some knowledge. For both groups, those over the age of 40 years had the least knowledge. Most refugees got this knowledge from school, an English language class, university or polytechnic, or from classes at Mangere.

At six months, many participants said they knew very little about New Zealand culture. At two years, *recently arrived* refugees were asked how they would describe the New Zealand way of life. Many individuals said New Zealand was a country where individual rights and freedom were respected and that New Zealand was a peaceful and safe country. A number commented on the good qualities of New Zealanders. Some individuals discussed aspects of the New Zealand culture they did not like. These included New Zealanders not caring about education, watching too much television, eating a lot of fast food, not saving money and excessive drinking. *Established* refugees responded similarly.

Ninety-one percent of participants interviewed at six months and 85 percent at two years felt it was important to learn about New Zealand culture, mostly in order to integrate and understand other New Zealanders. The nine participants who at two years said it was not important to learn about New Zealand culture gave a range of reasons. Four said they were not interested in knowing about others, while two said they did not have contact outside of their ethnic group. Two others said they did not think it would make a difference and two said it was not important because they were old.

Eight out of ten *established* refugees felt it was important or very important to learn about New Zealand culture. Some noted that it was important to know about their own culture as well as New Zealand culture and some discussed the importance of maintaining a balance between the two cultures.

The vast majority of refugees felt it was important to maintain their own culture in New Zealand in order to preserve a cultural identity for future generations, to share with others and because they were proud of it. When asked *how* they maintained their culture the most common responses were through eating traditional food, practising religion and speaking their language. Twelve individuals interviewed at six months said it was not important or neither important nor unimportant to maintain their culture in New Zealand. Their reasons included that they were no longer living in the former country and it was important to get used to their new culture.

At six months, many participants said they met regularly with members of their ethnic group, including 57 who said they met daily and 47 who met weekly. Many of the Convention refugees said they did not meet with their ethnic group. At two years, contact remained regular for many, with 97 participants indicating they met either daily or weekly with members of their ethnic group. Eighty-four *established* refugees said they regularly met with members of their ethnic group. These meetings occurred through religious observance, at cultural meetings and celebrations, and through informal visits to family and friends.

Only a small number of participants said they had some difficulty maintaining their culture, due to a lack of community in which to speak the language, certain cultural items being too costly or difficult to source, and a lack of community activity. Some service providers felt that New Zealanders, in general, “tolerated but did not encourage” the maintenance of other cultures.

A number of *recently arrived* refugees said they had shared their culture with people outside their ethnic group, either with friends and neighbours, at school, university or polytechnic, at cultural fairs and festivals, or at work. One hundred and thirty of the 189 *established* refugees had shared aspects of their culture with other groups. The most common reason for not sharing their culture beyond their ethnic group was difficulty with communication.

Settling in New Zealand

At each interview, research participants were asked how settled they felt and what their overall impressions of New Zealand were. Most participants felt safe from

physical harm, with many adding that they felt New Zealand was a peaceful and quiet country. A small group was concerned about crime, mainly theft.

When asked what they liked most about living in New Zealand, *recently arrived* refugees interviewed at six months said kind and friendly people, living in peace and quiet and having access to government services. Similar responses were given at two years and by *established* refugees. Many participants said there was nothing they disliked about New Zealand, while others did not know or did not wish to respond. Some dislikes that were noted were a lack of employment opportunities, crime, the behaviour of some New Zealanders, the weather and discrimination. Ten *established* refugees felt that people had too many rights.

When asked what advice they might offer prospective refugees, a number of participants mentioned learning English, or preparing by gaining qualifications or learning about New Zealand culture, while a smaller number would advise bringing family members and cultural items. Others said that once in New Zealand they would advise others to respect the laws, make the most of educational opportunities and work hard. Some *established* refugees said they would advise others about difficulties they would experience in New Zealand, such as with family reunification, finding work and saving money.

Burmese men in a focus group had difficulty with what they perceived as a lack of discipline in New Zealand. They had expected “a strict country with good rules and regulations” but had found this not to be the case. Iranian and Somali women felt they had a better quality of life in New Zealand. The Iranian women enjoyed the freedom they had in New Zealand compared to Iran but were unhappy with some aspects of life in New Zealand, perhaps because they had come from more privileged backgrounds.

The large majority of refugees interviewed at two and five years felt they were comfortable carrying out daily activities, and that it had become easier over time due to familiarity and developing communication skills in English. At six months, there was variation in the level of feeling settled by refugee type. Only 55 percent of Convention refugees said they felt settled, compared to 78 percent of Quota and 87 percent of Family Reunion refugees. Ninety-three percent of *established* refugees said they felt settled.

A range of factors were said to have assisted settlement, including support from friends and family, access to income support (or work), learning English, and government or non-government organisation (NGO) support in the form of educational opportunities, healthcare and housing.

Almost all refugees (98 percent) intended to stay in New Zealand. At six months their aspirations were to improve their English, reunite with family members, and find employment or engage in study. Some aspirations were more general: to provide a good future for their family; buy a house; or develop a business. At two years the overwhelming aspiration was employment, as was the case with *established* refugees.

Ninety percent of *recently arrived* refugees interviewed at two years intended to apply for New Zealand citizenship. Eighty-three percent of *established* refugees had already gained citizenship.

When asked what might assist resettlement, participants suggested further help with: education and language learning; family reunification; finding accommodation; financial assistance; orientation; and employment. When service providers were asked the same question they said that people within refugee communities were often best placed to help members of their own community, noting that this was easier in a well-established community.

Women and men were asked if they had any gender specific issues with resettlement. Only a small number said this was the case. The women felt their appearance drew unwanted attention, or that looking after children made it more difficult to learn English or find work. The difficulties for men were with finding work and worrying about family overseas, and their perception that men have less power and status in New Zealand. Service providers felt there was a lack of support for refugee men in New Zealand. Focus group participants also discussed the difficulty of adapting to a society where women had equal rights. Some Iranian women interviewed said that this issue had led to problems in their relationships.

6. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Resettlement is a journey. It is a process of learning, adapting and understanding. Coming to a new country with a different culture, language, religion, and traditions, is a challenging venture into the unknown. While this research examined the first five years of refugee resettlement, it is very evident that the process of resettlement is ongoing. On the evidence of this research, some may never get to the place where they can participate in this country's life to the same extent as other residents. Adaptation to New Zealand occurs at a different pace for the diverse groups of refugees. In general, younger people adapted faster.

Nearly all participants reported that New Zealand provided them with a safe and pleasant environment and that for the most part they encountered friendly and helpful people, both in daily life and when dealing with organisations. What participants liked about New Zealand reflected what most did not have in their former countries - freedom and democracy, safety and security, and peace and quiet. These are probably the most important mitigating factors for refugees when dealing with the challenges of resettlement, in particular their ability to become self-supporting. Safety and security and reduced stress were important reasons for improvements in participants' health.

Overall, there was a similarity in responses and issues raised across the *recently arrived* and *established* groups. This finding is important and suggests the trends and issues that emerged are likely to be similar for other refugees.

The research reinforces what is well known. Ability with English language is crucial to all aspects of resettlement and subsequently those with poorer English language ability need more help. The facilitation of English language learning, tailored to the needs to the individual, is vital. Being able to work is vital to refugee well-being.

However, refugees face numerous barriers to entering the workforce and need much assistance with this process.

The teenagers and young people interviewed showed an enthusiasm for their role in New Zealand society, especially a desire to learn about and take part in the New Zealand way of life, coupled with a determination to maintain their home culture. They also had an appreciation of the opportunities available to them. Many of their parents looked to the younger generation to be the ones to succeed. Although older refugees may struggle more with language, employment and integration than their children, the overwhelming majority reported a satisfaction with the services provided and a liking for New Zealand's societal structures and its citizens.

The main report summarises the issues arising from the research and they include:

- the importance of acknowledging and responding to refugee diversity (one size, or type, of service delivery will not meet all needs);
- refugees not having an understanding of available services or their entitlements;
- that entering the labour market is the greatest challenge;
- a need for more help with accessing English language training and suitable housing;
- that the provision of health services and schooling is working well; and
- support agencies are offering a good service to refugees.

It is important to note that facets of the issues noted above are those that face many New Zealanders. Hospital waiting lists, low incomes, and housing difficulties affect many who are not refugees, and the mitigation in these cases will come from the development of policy in a broad range of areas. Discrimination too, is something that must be addressed more broadly as an issue facing all migrants. This research also highlighted issues for particular groups of refugees.

The success of the programme run by the Mangere Refugee Reception Centre and the help provided by the RMS are all positive outcomes that can be further improved by the feedback provided in this report. Most importantly, the research has given a voice to refugees who in the process of resettlement, can disappear into the community. By bringing together their positive and negative impressions of resettlement, government and service providers can work towards improving services and developing policy to best support them on their journey.

On this note it is important that the government (in May 2004) has announced the national Immigration Settlement Strategy for migrants, refugees and their families. The Strategy's six goals for migrants and refugees are that they:

1. obtain employment appropriate to their qualifications and skills;
2. are confident using English in a New Zealand setting, or can access appropriate language support to bridge the gap;
3. are able to access appropriate information and responsive services that are available to the wider community (for example, housing, education, and services for children);
4. form supportive social networks and establish a sustainable community identity;

5. feel safe expressing their ethnic identity and are accepted by, and are part of, the wider host community; and
6. participate in civic, community and social activities.

The initial focus of this Strategy is to address the first three goals by improving the way career and labour market information is tailored to the needs of refugees and migrants, to provide extra funding for adult English language tuition, to increase English language resources in schools, and to improve resourcing for the assessment of refugee qualifications. The establishment of a national network of migrant resource services will provide a point of contact for providing information to refugees and migrants. Additional core funding has been given to the RMS, to assist with the resettlement of refugees.

The issues raised by this research will provide an important feed into the further development of this Strategy and the initiatives that will need to be developed to address gaps in refugee service provision.

01

INTRODUCTION

- 1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND
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SECTION 01

This section provides the background to the research and the methodology used.

Refugee Voices is a project developed to fill an information gap on the experiences of refugees resettling in New Zealand. As the title to this report implies, the research documents the journey undertaken by refugees during their initial resettlement period. The project was funded for a three-year period and in addition to research and administration support from the Department of Labour, it has received funding from the Ministry of Research, Science and Technology.³

To date there has been no major government sponsored research focusing on the resettlement experiences of refugees. The majority of New Zealand refugee studies completed since 1990 have been small in scale and situation specific, or related to only one national or ethnic group. The original research proposal arose early in 2000 when it emerged during the Department of Labour's consultation for the Longitudinal Immigration Survey: New Zealand (LisNZ) that there was strong inter-departmental and non-governmental interest in a research project with a focus on refugees.

For a number of reasons it was not feasible for the LisNZ to include refugees. Their often unique circumstances require different types of questions, and difficulties arise due to the wide range of languages spoken by refugees coming to New Zealand and the comparatively small numbers resettled in New Zealand in any one year. This last point meant it would have been difficult for the LisNZ to provide refugee specific data.

At a broad level, *Refugee Voices* will be used to identify areas where refugee well-being could be improved through changes to refugee support systems. More specifically, the information will assist the Department of Labour, other government departments and the non-government sector to more fully understand the process of refugee resettlement and some of the key factors or barriers that impact on this resettlement. It will provide information to assist with the development of resettlement policy and services appropriate to the needs of refugees in New Zealand.

³ The project was managed by the New Zealand Immigration Service (NZIS), a service of the Department of Labour.

1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This research provides the only comprehensive overview of the initial years of refugee life in New Zealand. Other studies undertaken by different, mostly academic, research teams supplement and extend this research by examining particular issues in more depth. Some of these studies are referenced in the appropriate parts of this report.

Three groups of refugees were interviewed for this research, namely Quota, Convention and Family Reunion refugees. Quota refugees are people whom the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has mandated as refugees offshore. These people are selected for resettlement to New Zealand under the annual Refugee Quota Programme. The annual Quota comprises three main sub-categories: protection cases; women-at-risk; and medical/disabled.

Convention refugees are former asylum seekers whose refugee status had been recognised in New Zealand by domestic authorities.⁴ Family Reunion refugees have been sponsored by refugee family members already residing in New Zealand. These three groups often come from similar refugee-producing situations but follow different routes into New Zealand. They are treated differently in terms of access to services and therefore have different resettlement experiences. The refugee groups are described further in 1.7 below.

Almost 400 refugees were interviewed face to face for this project, and the information gathered spans the first five years of their resettlement in New Zealand. In-depth focus groups were used to supplement the interview data and to explore certain issues in more detail. The topics covered in this chapter include:

- the research aim;
- a description of the research participants;
- a discussion of how people come to be refugees;
- refugee resettlement in New Zealand;
- profiles of the countries from which the refugees came from;
- New Zealand immigration policy and procedures for refugees; and
- a description of the report structure.

1.2 RESEARCH AIM

The aim of *Refugee Voices* was to explore the resettlement experiences of refugees who came to New Zealand over the last five to six years. The research provides refugees with a voice by collating their views, experiences and expectations. It was designed to contribute to the information needs of a wide range of people and organisations (including government departments and groups that provide services to

⁴ First instance determination for asylum seekers has been greatly shortened from a three year, 3000 case backlog in 1999, to the current three month determination.

refugees and refugees themselves), and to play a role in improving refugee well-being.

1.3 THE RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

The population for the research included two groups based on their length of time in New Zealand. The *recently arrived* group included Quota, Convention and Family Reunion refugees. These individuals were interviewed after six months in New Zealand (or, for Convention refugees, six months after gaining refugee status) and then again at two years. The *established* group comprised Quota refugees who had been in New Zealand for around five years. More detail is given in 2.5.

Participants for the research were selected using a sampling frame developed to balance gender, nationality, age and family size. Within each sub-group, families or individuals were selected randomly. The primary data source consisted of in-depth face-to-face interviews. These interviews were carried out in the participants' own languages by members of their communities. Data from the questionnaire was supplemented with material from focus groups that were carried out with refugee men, women, teenagers, Burmese refugees resettling in Nelson and refugee service providers. The research associates (interviewers) also took part in focus groups to provide feedback on the interview process and to discuss key themes that emerged from the interviews.

The methods and analytic strategy adopted were intensive and rigorous. Analytical processes included triangulation of data from multiple sources with the findings from interviews, focus groups and workshops with research associates to ensure rigour in data analysis and interpretation.

1.4 WHY PEOPLE BECOME REFUGEES

A refugee is defined by the UNHCR as:

“ . . . a person who, owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country.” (UNHCR, 1951 and 1967)

There are five key factors that distinguish a refugee:

- the person has to be outside their country of origin;
 - the reason for flight has to be a fear of persecution;
 - the fear of persecution has to be well founded;
 - the persecution has to result from one or more of the following grounds - race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion; and
 - they have to be unwilling or unable to seek the protection of their country.
- (UNHCR, 1951 and 1967)

The total population of concern to the UNHCR (including refugees, asylum seekers and others of concern) fell from 20.8 million persons at the end of 2002 to 17.1

million by the end of 2003. The global number of refugees reached an estimated 9.7 million by the end of 2003, which represented a decrease since the beginning of 2003 when 10.6 million refugees were recorded (UNHCR, 2004).

For those who are classified as refugees, the UNHCR promotes three durable solutions. Its first preference is voluntary repatriation, a solution which assumes that the original causes of refugee flight have been ameliorated sufficiently to permit the safe return of the refugees. If this is not possible, the UNHCR attempts to integrate the refugees locally, in what are known as countries of first asylum. The last solution is third country resettlement. This is considered to be the most expensive solution and one that can help the least number of people. It is promoted for especially vulnerable individuals and groups.

Reasons that individuals must flee and claim refugee status are many and varied, and include:

- involvement in pro-democracy or anti-governmental movements. For example, taking part in demonstrations, distributing pro-democracy leaflets and giving speeches denouncing the government;
- involvement of family members or friends in activities such as pro-democracy movements, demonstrations or anti-government activities;
- belonging to a community which for one reason or another is in danger because of a prevailing philosophy in their former country. For example, they may be members of a minority religious or ethnic group; and
- being caught up in civil warfare and famine and forced to flee to protect their lives.

1.5 REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT

Refugee resettlement must be viewed within the context of broader international humanitarian policies addressing the causes of forced migration and the principles of asylum for the protection of displaced people. New Zealand's refugee policy reflects the government's commitment to fulfilling its international humanitarian obligations and responsibilities under the United Nations 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees. In 1947, the newly formed Commission on Human Rights called for recognition of the status of refugees. This move was reflected in Article 14 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which stated that everyone had the right to seek and enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2003, 111-112).

New Zealand is one of a small number of countries that formally provide for the third country resettlement of a quota of refugees. Other countries include Australia, Canada, the United States of America, the Netherlands, Sweden, Denmark, Norway and Finland. Nine other countries have recently introduced resettlement programmes, namely Argentina, Benin, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Chile, Iceland, Ireland, Spain and the United Kingdom (*Protecting Refugees*, www.unhcr.ch/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home).

New Zealand resettles 750 refugees per annum referred by the UNHCR under the Refugee Quota Programme. These people are typically referred to as 'mandated' or 'Quota' refugees. New Zealand also accepts an additional 200 to 500 Convention

refugees per annum. In addition to these groups, there are an estimated 300 plus people from ‘refugee-like’ situations admitted into the country every year through family sponsored immigration policies.

This means that a *conservative* estimate of refugees resettled in New Zealand every year would be 1,250. In some exceptional circumstances, the government provides additional assistance. For example, in response to the humanitarian crisis in Kosovo in 1999, the government granted resettlement under a special programme to over 400 Kosovars who had family in New Zealand, in addition to the annual Refugee Quota.

Under the Refugee Quota Programme, New Zealand has prioritised the needs of refugees rather than selecting people who have the greatest potential to most easily adapt to the New Zealand social and economic environment. For example, the annual Quota of 750 includes 75 places for women at risk, and 75 places for refugees with medical problems or disabilities. Places for emergency resettlement, for purposes of protection, are prioritised over other resettlement cases. This goes some way to explain why the resettlement of refugees provides challenges for both the individual refugees and the host community.

1.5.1 Refugee resettlement in recent years

Between 1980/81 and 2002/03, 16,556 refugees and displaced persons were resettled under the Refugee Quota Programme. This number is further boosted by family reunification and positive determination of refugee status claims. The number of people from refugee-like circumstances entering through family reunification policies is very difficult to estimate. They are not ‘tagged’ as refugees on any database to enable counting. Table 1.1 below shows the numbers of refugees approved through the Refugee Quota and also refugees with a successful determination of their asylum claim over the period 1992/93 to 2002/03.

Table 1.1 Refugees approved for resettlement in New Zealand, 1992/93 to 2002/03

Year approved	Refugee type		
	Quota	Convention	Total
	n	n	n
1992/93	412	128	540
1993/94	737	68	805
1994/95	822	134	956
1995/96	780	147	927
1996/97	527	180	707
1997/98	677	275	952
1998/99	726	538	1,264
1999/00	716	473	1,189
2000/01	746	312	1,058
2001/02	750	627	1,377
2002/03	604	247	851
Total	7,497	3,129	10,626

Sources: For Quota refugees, the DoL’s Refugee Quota Branch. For Convention refugees, the DoL’s immigration database.

The numbers above must be read with some caution as they do not necessarily represent the total number of refugees living in the country. Some refugees may have left the country after acquiring citizenship to settle in other countries, especially

Australia. Some may have returned to their home countries following changes in the situation, and there are changes due to births and deaths. The actual number in New Zealand could only be determined through a comprehensive census.

1.5.2 Source countries of refugees

The geographic pattern of source countries for New Zealand's refugee intake has changed over the past 25 years in response to changing global circumstances and humanitarian needs. Whereas from the late-1970s through to the mid-1980s, Indochinese refugees were the dominant group resettled in New Zealand, a broader global focus has led to a more diverse range of countries featuring in more recent years. The top five source countries for Quota refugees in New Zealand between 1997/98 and 2002/03 were Iraq, Somalia, Ethiopia, Afghanistan and Burma/Myanmar, representing the global pattern of refugee crises over the same period. For Convention refugees, the top source countries were Iran, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, Somalia and Iraq (see Table 1.2 below). The characteristics of the refugees who took part in this research, including their nationalities, are described in Chapter 2. A profile of the source countries of refugees is included in 1.6.

Table 1.2 Refugees approved for resettlement in New Zealand by country of origin, 1997/98 to 2002/03

Refugees approved for resettlement			
Quota		Convention	
Nationality	n	Nationality	n
Iraqi	976	Iranian	519
Somali	859	Sri Lankan	450
Ethiopian	681	Afghan	381
Afghan	442	Somali	184
Burmese	344	Iraqi	168
Iranian	287	Unrecorded	111
Sudanese	128	Chinese	63
Eritrean	99	Kuwaiti	55
Vietnamese	68	Zimbabwean	53
Burundian	46	Ethiopian	42
Laotian	41	Indian	40
Congolese	35	Algerian	35
Sri Lankan	33	Burmese	25
Rwandan	28	Colombian	21
Yugoslavian	27	Sudanese	19
Other	125	Other	306
Total	4,219	Total	2,472

1.5.3 Geographic location of refugees in New Zealand

Having arrived in New Zealand, the geographic settlement pattern of refugees tends to follow the national pattern of population concentrations, with the major urban centres being the main areas of refugee resettlement. The main centres are the areas of greatest employment opportunity, and also the points where refugee communities have become established over the years. They provide social networks into which recently arrived refugees may tap. The urban centres are also less likely to present the challenges of integration posed by small regional centres, since they are more cosmopolitan and multicultural.

A high proportion of the refugee population is located in the Auckland region. The main reasons for this include the fact that Auckland is the major entry point to New Zealand and has the Department of Labour's (DoL's) Mangere Refugee Reception Centre (Mangere, where Quota refugees spend their first six weeks) as well as a range of non-government organisations (NGOs) that provide services for both Quota and Convention refugees. It is also where the DoL has its refugee determination branch for asylum seekers.

1.6 REFUGEE COUNTRY PROFILES⁵

The refugees interviewed for this report came to New Zealand from countries in the following four regions: the Middle East, the Horn of Africa, South Asia, and South East Asia. The populations of the countries within these regions are ethnically and religiously diverse, and their inhabitants speak various languages and dialects.

New Zealand's Refugee Quota reflects global need. The regions profiled below have all experienced (sometimes extended) periods of civil unrest and repression, which has resulted in a lack of adequate food, water, health and education resources for their populations.

1.6.1 Middle East

The Middle East is also known as Southwest Asia. The refugees interviewed for this report came from three countries in that region: Iran, Iraq and Afghanistan. Iran is bordered by Iraq to its west, and Afghanistan to its east, and both Iraq and Iran border the Persian Gulf.

Ethnic and religious communities of the three countries cross borders, and displaced people from each of the countries have sought refuge or asylum with their neighbours (for example, in 2003, Iran hosted around 2 million Afghan refugees and 200,000 Iraqis) or the wider global community.

Iraq

Main Languages: Arabic, Surani, Kirmanji Kurdish, Turkish

Main Religions: Shi'i and Sunni Islam, Christianity, Yazidid faith, Sabian faith, Judaism

Minority groups (based on 1997 figures): Shi'i (55 percent), Kurds (22 percent), Sunni Arabs (17 percent)

Saddam Hussein became president in 1979. His government drove Kurdish civilians north, and also persecuted Marsh Arabs and Shi'i Arabs. Among the religious minorities Assyrian Shi'is generally insist on ethnic difference from Arabs, whereas Chaldeans have tended to accept an Arab identity. The Iran-Iraq war began in 1980 and ended in a United Nations (UN) cease-fire in 1988, leaving Iraq under trade

⁵ Information in this section is taken from the following resources provided by the New Zealand Refugee Status Library:

Amnesty International website, www.amnesty.org

US Committee for Refugees website, www.refugees.org

Minority Rights Group International (1997).

Forced Migration Online website, www.forcedmigration.org

sanctions and its people dependent on government rations. The Gulf War conflict in 1991 resulted in a decisive victory for the coalition forces, but left a chronic shortage of medicine and hospital equipment, and the water supply and sewage systems degraded.

Amnesty International reports to the end of 2002 describe continuing executions of members of political or religious groups, the forcible expulsion of non-Arabs, and threats against families of opposition activists.

Iran

Main Languages: Persian, Azeri and other Turkish dialects, Arabic, Kurdish

Main Religions: Ithna'ashari, Sunni and Ismai'ili Islam, Zoroastrian, Baha'i, Armenian and Assyrian Christianity and Judaism

Minority groups: Azaris, Kurds, Baluch

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei established the Islamic Republic of Iran in 1979 which enforces adherence to strict Islamic principles. The war with Iraq in the 1980s devastated the country's economy. Meanwhile religious and ethnic minorities remain subject to discrimination, persecution and political repression.

Afghanistan

Main Languages: Pashtu, Dari

Main Religions: Islam (majority Sunni, minority Shia); Sikhism; Hinduism; Judaism

Minority groups (based on 1997 figures): Pashtuns, Tajiks, Hazaras

The political devastation of Afghanistan (from Soviet invasion and occupation in the 1980s through the Mujahadeen era to the Taliban) has been exacerbated by natural disaster-induced displacement. The Taliban government (1994 to 2001) implemented restrictive policies grounded in conservative interpretations of Islam and Pashtunwali (Pashtun tribal codes). By 2001, religious minorities (including Ismaelis, Hindus, Sikhs, Jews, and Bahais) were required to wear a distinguishing yellow badge, leading many to seek refuge elsewhere. Post-Taliban repatriation in "safety and dignity" can not be assured in some parts since the new government is almost completely reliant on foreign aid. Many Afghans continue to flee in search of better economic opportunities.

1.6.2 Horn of Africa

The 'Horn' refers to the north-eastern extension of Africa, including Somalia, Ethiopia, Eritrea and Djibouti. The latter is a small country bordering the other three, and separating Eritrea from Somalia. Eritrea sits to the north east of Ethiopia, while Somalia borders it to the south east.

Ethiopia

Languages: Amharic, Tigrinya, Oromigna

Religions: Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity, Islam, animism

Minority groups (based on 1997 figures): Oromo (43 percent), Sidama (8 percent), Somalis (6 percent)

Many refugees from Ethiopia are fleeing violent clashes between rival ethnic groups over scarce food and water. From 1974 to 1991, military dictator Mengistu Haile

Mariam led what came to be called the Peoples Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. Subsequent leaders have introduced political and economic reform but armed conflict continues. From 1998 to 2000, Ethiopia fought a border war with Eritrea, between which the UN currently administers a buffer zone.

Somalia

Languages: Somali, Arabic, Gosha

Religions: Islam, local religions

Minority groups: Bantu (2 percent)

Somalis make up 96 percent of the population of Somalia and 60 percent of that population are nomadic. Somalia has endured a recent history of brutal civil war and factional fighting. Mohammad Siad Barre's regime (1969 to 1991) exacerbated traditional rivalries and by the late eighties the government was at war with five separate opposition groups. In 2000 the Transitional National Government encountered armed opposition from local warlords and did not succeed in establishing government. Intensified factional conflict displaced an estimated further 50,000 during 2002.

1.6.3 South Asia

Sri Lanka

Languages: Sinhala, Tamil, English

Religions: Buddhist, Hindu, Christian, Islam

Minority groups: Tamil, Moor, Burgherm Malay, Vedda

Sri Lanka is an island in the Indian Ocean off the south east coast of India. Since 1983, Sri Lankan government forces that represent the Buddhist Sinhalese majority (around 70 percent) have fought the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, a mostly Hindu separatist group that has sought independence for predominantly ethnic Tamil areas of northern and eastern Sri Lanka. A ceasefire in February 2002 and further negotiations in 2003 have brought the prospect of peace.

1.6.4 South East Asia

Myanmar and Vietnam are both countries on the south east of the continent of Asia to the south of mainland China. Myanmar is east of India and Bangladesh, and southwest of the People's Republic of China. It is bordered by Laos and Thailand to the east, and the Bay of Bengal to the west. Vietnam lies to the east of Thailand on the South China Sea.

Burma/Myanmar

Main ethnic groups: Karen (majority Buddhist, a number converted to Christianity during British rule – they are currently a minority in their own state), Shan, Mon, Chin (Tibeto-Burmese origin), Kachin, Arakanese Muslims, Karenni

Myanmar consists of 135 major ethnic groups and seven ethnic minority states. Since its independence in 1948 it has been torn by political strife and ethnic unrest. The National League for Democracy was voted into power in 1990, but military leaders prevented the opposition party from taking office. The Burmese Border Consortium reported that 2002 was "the worst year for human rights abuses and destruction by the Burmese army since 1997."

Vietnam

Main Languages: Vietnamese, Hoa (Chinese), Khmer, Hmong

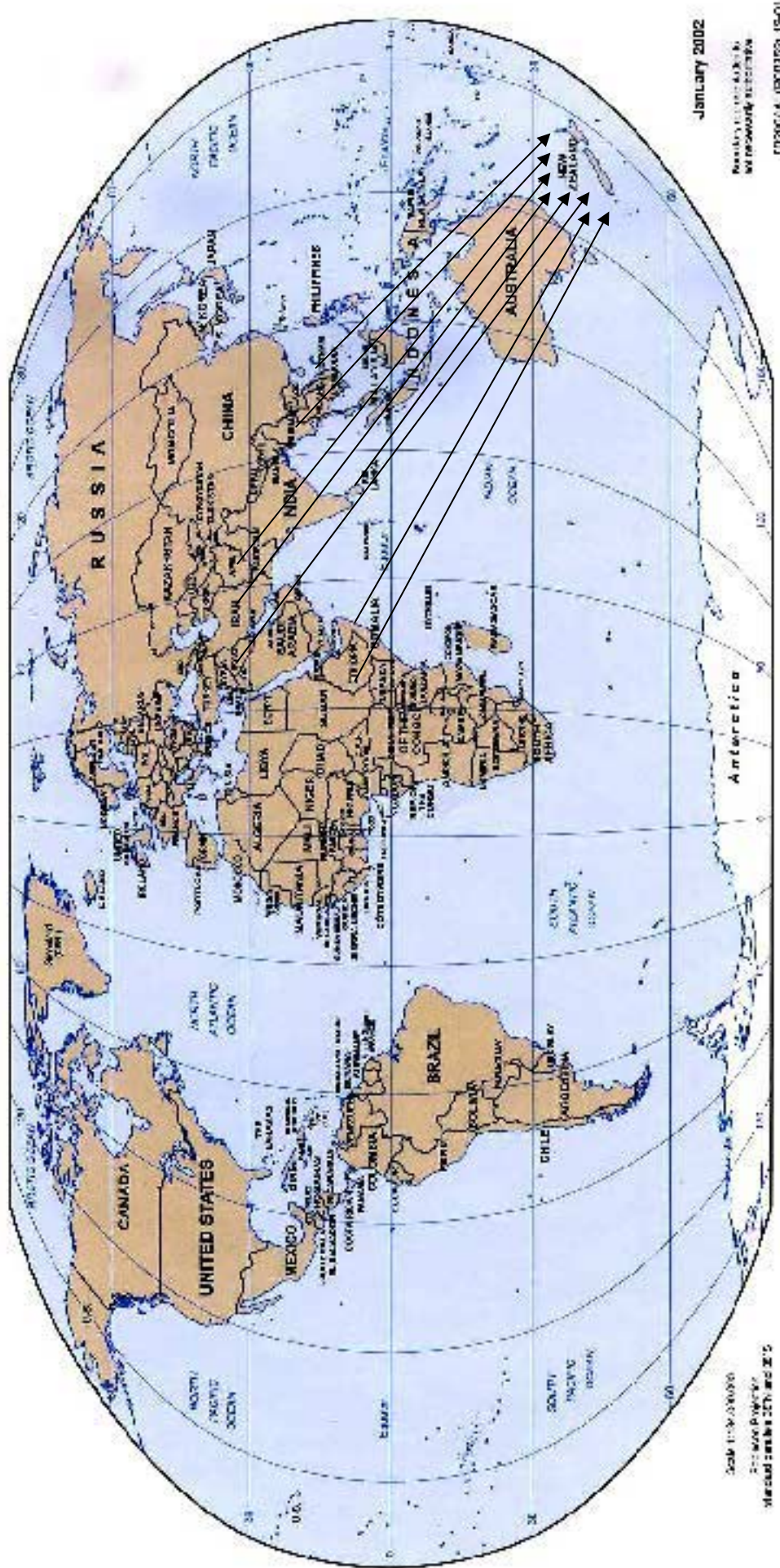
Main Religions: Buddhism, Roman Catholicism, indigenous syncretic religions, animism

Main minority groups (based on 1997 figures): highlanders (10 percent), Chinese (Hoa) and Khmer (1.3 percent)

Despite economic gains in recent years Vietnam remains one of Asia's poorest countries. The ruling Communist Party of Vietnam does not tolerate dissent, and freedom of movement, expression and association are restricted.

See Figure 1.1 for a map indicating the source countries of the refugees included in this research.

Figure 1.1 Source countries of refugees included in this research



Source: Courtesy of The General Libraries, The University of Texas at Austin

1.7 NEW ZEALAND IMMIGRATION POLICY AND PROCEDURES FOR REFUGEES

Although the three refugee groups, Quota, Convention and Family Reunion refugees, may be from similar refugee situations, they are treated differently in terms of accessing services such as housing and welfare. This differential treatment can affect resettlement outcomes and therefore, for this research, it has been important to include members of each group in the research. More detail on policy and practice for each group is given below.

1.7.1 Quota refugees

Quota refugees are people whom the UNHCR has mandated as refugees offshore. Often these people are located in refugee camps in countries of first asylum. In New Zealand's case, the UNHCR refers refugees who are in need of resettlement in a third country to the New Zealand Immigration Service (NZIS) for consideration. The NZIS accepts Quota refugees under three main categories:

- *Protection:* These are high priority refugees who need protection from an emergency situation. They may also include refugees with immediate family in New Zealand who entered under a previous Quota;
- *Women at risk:* These are women refugees alone and at risk in a refugee camp. They may or may not have dependent children; and
- *Medical/Disabled:* These are refugees who either have a medical condition that cannot be treated in the country of refuge and can be treated or helped in New Zealand, or have a disability that requires support.

Quota refugees accepted for resettlement spend their first six weeks at Mangere in Auckland. This centre provides initial accommodation, orientation services and medical screening/treatment. At the end of the six weeks, the DoL's Immigration Service contracts the Refugee and Migrant Service (RMS, a non-governmental organisation) to assist refugees to settle into local communities around the country. This assistance is for a six month period. Volunteers assist by acting as sponsors. The communities are mainly in Auckland, Hamilton, Wellington and Christchurch.

1.7.2 Convention refugees (ex-asylum seekers)

As a signatory to the United Nations 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, New Zealand is obligated to consider all claims for refugee status (or political asylum) made at the border in New Zealand. The most important obligation is contained in Article 33. This article prohibits the expulsion of a refugee to the borders of a territory where their life would be threatened on account of their civil or political status. In practice, this means that New Zealand must allow refugee status claimants arriving at the border to remain in the country, so that the credibility and merits of their claim may be assessed. Typically these people claim asylum on arrival at the border or prior/subsequent to the expiry of a temporary permit. A determination is made and the claimant may be granted refugee status.

In New Zealand, the Refugee Status Branch of the DoL's Immigration Service considers all claims. If unsuccessful, claimants can lodge an appeal against the DoL's decision to the Refugee Status Appeals Authority (RSAA). The RSAA is

independent of the DoL. Claimants are generally granted a work permit while their claim is being determined, but may be detained if considered a risk and their identity is unknown. They can also receive some welfare assistance (income support, accommodation assistance, healthcare and education).

Most asylum seekers are based in Auckland as that is the main entry point into New Zealand. In the past, Convention refugees may have been in New Zealand for up to two or three years before their refugee status was determined. More recently, and particularly since 2000/01, the time before an initial determination has been greatly shortened, to three months.

1.7.3 Family reunion refugees

People from refugee-like circumstances come to New Zealand to join family members through family sponsored immigration policies. These refugees are not identified as refugees on their applications for residence. They are sponsored to New Zealand by family members and can live with or near them. Family sponsored immigration policies include the Family Category, which allows individuals to maintain and be part of a family unit.

A new policy, the Refugee Family Quota, was introduced in October 2001. The category is for parents, grandparents, siblings, adult children, grandchildren, aunts, uncles, nieces and nephews of New Zealand residents who were refugees, and who do not qualify under any other residence category. The quota was fixed at 300 places in 2002/2003. None of the refugees interviewed for this research came through this new policy.

Some refugees included in this research were approved through the Humanitarian Category, which closed in October 2001. In this category, principal applicants qualified for residence where serious humanitarian circumstances existed and there was a close family connection with New Zealand. The principal applicant or the New Zealand party was required to show that either serious physical and/or serious emotional harm was occurring and that the only reasonable solution was to grant residence in New Zealand.

Refugees sponsored to New Zealand through family sponsored immigration policies were generally the most difficult group to access for this research as they are neither labelled 'refugees' nor are they easy to locate, as many do not come into contact with refugee servicing agencies. They are also the people we knew the least about.

1.8 LITERATURE REVIEW

A literature review on refugee resettlement was completed in May 2001 (Gray and Elliott, 2001). The full review is available on the DoL's website. The review helped develop information needs and identify gaps, and was the first stage of this project.

1.9 REPORT STRUCTURE

The report is grouped into nine sections. The first section provides an introduction to the research and describes the objectives and methodology (including a description of the research ethics). Section 02 provides some background information about the

research participants and describes their arrival experiences in New Zealand. Sections 03 through 05 (titled Settlement; Training, Work and Income; and Social Integration) describe and analyse the main findings. Section 06 summarises the research and draws some conclusions. Sections 07 and 08 include the Appendices and the bibliography respectively.

2 OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter outlines the objectives and methodology of the research. The research population and sample are described, along with the survey questionnaire and the use of focus groups. Limitations of the research are discussed, and the research ethics are described. The topics covered in this chapter include:

- the research methodology;
- a description of the research team;
- the objectives of the research;
- an outline of the research population and sampling frame;
- the contact and response rates;
- description of the research procedures;
- the cultural issues;
- the interview context;
- issues around interpretation of the data; and finally
- research ethics.

2.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research design and methodology sought to provide refugees with a voice through a participatory research approach. The core assumption behind using such an approach is that stakeholder participation in developing and implementing the research will enhance research relevance, ownership, and thus utilisation. Ongoing engagement of key stakeholders in the research was encouraged at each stage of the research.

Consultation was undertaken on the scope of the research, the research objectives and questions, the methods of data collection, ways of encouraging participation, and ways of disseminating the findings. Two formal groups were established:

- an Advisory Group consisting of government departments and NGOs providing services to refugees, and representatives from refugee communities. This group provided input to the project during its design, implementation and analysis phase. In setting up the Advisory Group the research team went for depth rather than breadth of stakeholders. This group included several former refugees who were nominated to participate; and
- a Steering Group including a member nominated from the NGO community working with refugees, as well as senior DoL management. This group provided high-level oversight to the project.

2.2.1 Participatory research

Participatory research (PR) principles have guided this research project. The key principles of PR that have been acknowledged and incorporated are that

- the research involves and is useful to key stakeholders (government policy teams, groups that provide services to refugees and refugees themselves);
- the research is context-specific, rooted in the concerns, interests and problems of key stakeholders;
- the research methodology respects and uses knowledge and experiences of key stakeholders; and
- the research favours collective methods of knowledge generation; participatory research is a collective process and recognises that knowledge is deepened, enriched and more useful when processed collectively.

PR principles were embedded in the methodology for Refugee Voices by ensuring that the following key elements were included:

- the process was participatory with key stakeholders actively involved in decision-making;
- the process acknowledged and addressed inequities of power and voice among participating stakeholders. Refugees were interviewed in their own languages and interviewing approaches took their different needs and refugee status into account;
- the process used multiple and varied approaches to data collection and coding, that is, questions and issues were explored from different perspectives so as to compare, cross-check and gain insights. Varied approaches also meant that methods of analysis were appropriate to local contexts and particular groups of people; and
- the process aimed to build capacity – training for the research associates, who undertook the interviews, relating to collecting data and basic interviewing and research principles was undertaken to help them understand the research process and their roles.

2.3 THE RESEARCH TEAM

The spirit of inquiry that pervaded the research process was possible first and foremost because of the rapport, trust and credibility that existed among all participants in the research team, and particularly between the research associates and participant groups. Therefore an important consideration for this research was the composition of the research team for undertaking the data collection and analysis. An internal-external team was set up and tasks were shared by the members of this team.

Key responsibility for interviewing was undertaken by research associates who were recruited from the participating refugee communities and trained as research assistants and interviewers. Because they came from the participating communities, they had a deep understanding of the cultures of the people they interviewed and this assisted them to gain entry and to build trusting relationships with the research participants. Another advantage was the research associates were able to undertake interviews in the participants' own languages thereby ensuring high-quality data collection (further described in Section 2.7.1 below).

2.4 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The specific objectives that guided the development of this project were:

1. to describe the circumstances that led people to become refugees (via a review of the literature);
2. to describe the processes by which the refugees arrived in New Zealand, including any experiences in refugee camps;
3. to describe, for Quota refugees, their experiences of the refugee selection process, and their experiences while at the Mangere Refugee Reception Centre;
4. to describe, for Convention refugees, their experiences of the refugee determination process, and their experiences in New Zealand while waiting for determination of their refugee claim;
5. to describe, for Family Reunion refugees, their experiences of the immigration residence approval process and their experiences while waiting for determination of their residence application;
6. to describe the resettlement experiences of refugees in New Zealand over the first five years of resettlement in areas such as:
 - Experiences of agencies providing services to refugees
 - Housing, both access and quality
 - Family reunification
 - Social networks
 - Physical and mental health needs
 - Learning English
 - Employment, including self employment
 - Education
 - Cultural integration; and
7. to identify factors that enhance successful resettlement experiences and also barriers that hinder the resettlement for different populations of refugees.

2.5 POPULATION AND SAMPLING FRAME

The DoL's immigration database provided the sampling frame for this research project. The research had a number of distinct populations. To enable coverage of issues for refugees over their initial resettlement period - the first five to six years - the refugees interviewed were divided into two groups based on their length of time in New Zealand:

- A. The first group were *recently arrived* Quota, Convention and Family Reunion refugees who arrived in New Zealand or had their refugee status determined between January and July 2001. Some of the Family Reunion refugees had been in the country for up to six months longer as the time period for this group had to be extended in order to recruit sufficient numbers into the sample. *Recently arrived* refugees were interviewed six months after arrival, or determination of their refugee status, and again at two years after arrival. The research interviews

were held between July and December 2001 and again between February and June 2003.

The population for *recently arrived* refugees was:

- *Quota refugees* - all mandated refugees who arrived in New Zealand from January to July 2001;
- *Convention refugees* - all asylum refugees with successful determination of their refugee claim from January to June 2001; and
- *Family Reunion refugees* - all individuals who took up residence through the Family or Humanitarian Categories between July 2000 and June 2001 who had former refugees as family members and who met refugee criteria.

B. The second group were *established* Quota refugees who had been in New Zealand for between four and six years (arrived between January 1996 and June 1998). It was originally intended to recruit *established* refugees who arrived over a shorter timeframe, but the timeframe was extended in order to recruit sufficient numbers as a number of refugees had left the country or did not wish to take part. Other individuals could not be traced (see Table 2.1 below). *Established* refugees were interviewed once between May and November 2002. Only Quota refugees were included in this group, as there were more avenues to obtain accurate address information for Quota refugees than for other refugee groups.

The scope of the research was limited to refugees living in the Auckland urban region (consisting of Auckland, Manukau, North Shore and Waitakere), Hamilton, Wellington (including Porirua, Hutt City and Upper Hutt) and Christchurch. These are the cities into which the majority of refugees resettle.

In addition to the refugees who were individually interviewed, focus groups were held with recently arrived Burmese Quota refugees living in Nelson, and with groups of refugee men, women and teenagers. These focus groups are discussed in more detail below (see 2.7.6).

2.5.1 Sample selection

Recently arrived refugees

Participants for the study were identified using the immigration database. A sampling frame for *recently arrived* refugees was developed to ensure the sample was selected to balance gender, nationality, age and family size.⁶ Within each sub-group the families or individuals were selected randomly. The sample was weighted to take into account the relative numbers of refugees living in each urban region.

A maximum number of three people per refugee family were interviewed. This included the principal applicant, their partner/spouse (if applicable) and one or two other family members. The additional family members were selected from all family

⁶ The group selected is generally representative of the population but also takes into account the importance of having specific groups within that population, such as location in New Zealand, a spread of ethnic groups and a mix of young and old.

members aged 13 years and over. There were also a number of refugees who came on their own and who were selected based on the sampling frame. Many of these individual people were Convention refugees.

Quota refugees arrive at the Mangere Refugee Reception Centre (Mangere) in groups of approximately 120 every six or seven weeks between February and December each year. Participants for the study were recruited in four cohorts from those arriving in the February, April, May and July intakes.

Determining “refugee” status for people migrating through family sponsored immigration policies was difficult. A three-stage procedure was used to select the Family Reunion sub-sample. An initial list of people was generated from the immigration database to include those who were approved for residence between July 2000 and June 2001 and who had sponsors who were approved for residence under the Family, Humanitarian or Refugee Categories. The list only included people from ‘traditional’ refugee-source countries (including Somalia, Ethiopia, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, Myanmar/Burma, Sri Lanka, Vietnam and Laos).

Once this list was generated, the sampling approach described above was used. The third stage involved approaching the people on the list and asking a series of screening questions to determine if they were from refugee-like circumstances. The screening criteria were based on the UNHCR definition of a refugee and were developed to ensure only genuine refugees were interviewed. See Appendix 1 for the screening criteria questions.

Established refugees

A list of Quota refugees arriving in New Zealand between January 1996 and June 1998 was generated from the immigration database and formed the basis for the *established* refugee sample. Participants were drawn from those who originally settled in the four main urban regions of Auckland, Hamilton, Wellington and Christchurch. As for the *recently arrived* refugee sample, a sampling frame was used to ensure the sample was selected to balance gender, nationality, age, and family size. Within each of these strata refugees were selected randomly. A maximum number of three people per refugee family were interviewed. This included the principal applicant, their partner/spouse (if applicable) and one or two other family members. The additional family members were selected from all family members aged 13 years and over.

Contact details for *established* refugees were identified with assistance from the Refugee and Migrant Service (RMS). Their networks and knowledge of the Quota refugee communities provided the contact details of as many of these people as possible.⁷ As is discussed below, the *established* refugees proved difficult to trace and it was necessary to also refer to other sources such as the Electoral Roll in order to obtain accurate address information for some participants.

⁷ The RMS provides social services and co-ordinates the training of volunteer support workers to assist Quota refugees with their on-going settlement needs and accessing mainstream services. Their support lasts for six months after the refugees leave Mangere.

2.5.2 Interview sample

Recently arrived refugees

At the first wave of interviews (at six months) the sample of 209 *recently arrived* refugees consisted of the following:

- 50 Quota refugee family groups (96 people). This is approximately 15 percent of those arriving in New Zealand through the Refugee Quota each year;
- 38 Convention refugee family groups (42 people). This is approximately 15 percent of those granted residence in a year; and
- 47 Family Reunion family groups (71 people).

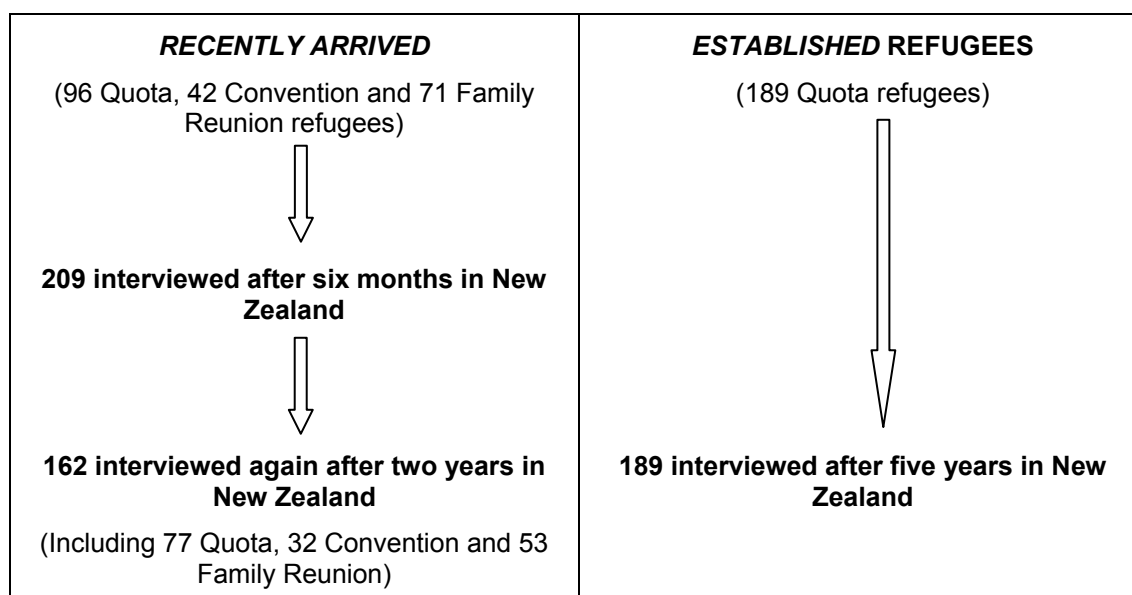
On average, 1.9 Quota refugees were interviewed per family, 1.5 Family Reunion refugees per family and 1.1 Convention refugees per family. This reflects the fact that Quota and Family Reunion refugees often come to New Zealand with family members, whereas Convention refugees more often come alone.

Of those who were interviewed at six months, 162 were interviewed again in the second wave of interviews at two years. The reasons for individuals not being interviewed a second time are summarised in Table 2.1 below. The characteristics of those who were not interviewed at the second wave are summarised in Table A.4.1 in Appendix 4.

Established refugees

For the *established* refugees, 189 Quota refugees (104 families) were interviewed. This group was interviewed only once to explore the longer term resettlement experiences of refugees.

Figure 2.1 *Recently arrived and established refugee sample*



2.6 INTERVIEW OUTCOMES

Table 2.1 shows interview outcomes for the *recently arrived* refugee group. Overall, the contact/response rate for Quota refugees at six months was very good (81 percent of those selected were interviewed). With Family Reunion refugees, 41 percent of those selected were interviewed, although a further 22 percent of those selected did

not meet the refugee criteria. For Convention refugees, the contact/response rate was 58 percent. Quota refugees knew the most about *Refugee Voices* as researchers had discussed the project and its purpose with them at Mangere. The research team also worked closely with the RMS to obtain contact details for the Quota refugees. With the other two groups, the research team relied on a variety of sources for contact information including, research associates' links in their communities, the immigration database, and published address information such as the Telecom White Pages™.

Of the *recently arrived* refugees interviewed at six months, 162 people (78 percent) were interviewed again at two years. Nineteen people did not wish to take part in the second wave of interviews and 17 interviews were not completed within the interview field period. Five people could not be contacted due to moving either within New Zealand or overseas. One reason that some people gave for not wanting to take part in the second wave of interviews was that they felt the New Zealand Immigration Service (NZIS) had not done enough to assist them, especially in terms of helping them bring their families to New Zealand. A few others said they were too busy or were sick. The demographic characteristics of those who did not take part in the second interview are described in Table A.4.1 in Appendix 4.

Table 2.1 Interview outcomes for recently arrived refugees

Interview outcome	Refugee type							
	Quota		Convention		Family Reunion		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
6 months								
Completed interview	96	81	42	58	71	41	209	57
Untraceable	10	8	23	32	25	14	58	16
Did not meet criteria	-	-	-	-	38	22	38	10
Person refused	12	10	8	11	40	23	60	16
Total	118	100	73	100	174	100	365	100
2 years								
Completed interview	77	80	32	76	53	75	162	78
Untraceable	1	1	3	7	2	3	6	3
Person had moved	2	2	0	0	3	4	5	2
Person refused	8	8	6	14	5	7	19	9
Interview pending (not completed in interview field period)	8	8	1	2	8	11	17	8
Total	96	100	42	100	71	100	209	100

Of the *established* refugee group, the combined contact and response rate was 55 percent (see Table 2.2). Because this group had been in New Zealand for about five years there were some difficulties obtaining accurate address information. Members of some ethnic groups were harder to trace than others. The RMS suggested a reason for this was that a high proportion of some ethnic groups had on-migrated over the five-year period (for example, the RMS estimated that up to two thirds of Cambodian refugees had moved to Australia).

In addition to using the contact methods discussed above, an up-to-date electronic version of the electoral roll was used to try and obtain addresses, as well as a database held by the ESOL Home Tutors Service. Thirty-nine individuals could not be traced and 58 had left the country. Fifty-eight of those who were selected did not wish to take part.

Table 2.2 Interview outcomes for established refugees

Interview outcome	Total	
	n	%
Completed interview	189	55
Untraceable	39	11
Person refused	58	17
Person left New Zealand	58	17
Total	344	100

2.6.1 Demographics of the sample – *recently arrived* refugees

Table 2.3 shows some of the demographic characteristics of the *recently arrived* refugees who were interviewed at six months. The nationalities presented are from the immigration database. A large proportion of *recently arrived* refugees came from Iraq, and many of these individuals came to New Zealand as Family Reunion refugees. Most of the Convention refugees came from Sri Lanka and Iran. Quota refugees were the most diverse group in terms of nationality.

One of the aims of the research was to canvas the perspectives of different age groups living to New Zealand. Where possible, those aged 13 to 16 years and 65 years and over were included in the research. Most *recently arrived* refugees were in the 25 to 39 year age group (41 percent). As expected, there was a more varied mix of ages among Quota and Family Reunion refugees than for Convention refugees.

Women and girls make up approximately 50 percent of the world refugee population (UNHCR, 2001). Forty-seven percent of those interviewed at six months were women and 53 percent were men. The higher number of men was due to the fact that many Convention refugees were men.

Table 2.3 Characteristics of recently arrived refugees

	Refugee type				
	Quota	Convention	Family Reunion	Total	
	n	n	n	n	%
Nationality					
Afghan	5	2	8	15	7
Burmese	15	1	1	17	8
Ethiopian	16	1	1	18	9
Iranian	18	9	4	31	15
Iraqi	15	2	50	67	32
Somali	27	1	0	28	13
Sri Lankan	0	26	6	32	15
Other	0	0	1	1	0
Age					
Under 15 years	6	0	4	10	5
15 to 24 years	37	3	11	51	24
25 to 39 years	28	33	25	86	41
40 to 64 years	24	6	22	52	25
65 years and over	1	0	9	10	5
Gender					
Male	44	31	35	110	53
Female	52	11	36	99	47
Total	96	42	71	209	100

Source: The nationalities listed above are taken from the DoL's immigration database.

More than half of the interviews were completed in Auckland, because of the numbers resettling there (see Table 2.4). The nationalities interviewed in other centres were limited by who actually settled there. Most Convention refugees arrive in Auckland because that is New Zealand's main airport. The RMS settles Quota refugees in the four main centres, and occasionally in Nelson and the Hawkes Bay. Due to this organised resettlement policy, this group was the most regionally diverse. The Family Reunion refugees interviewed were based mainly in Auckland and Wellington. Additional demographic information can be found in Appendix 3.

Table 2.4 Nationalities of recently arrived refugees by urban region

Nationality	Urban region				
	Auckland	Hamilton	Wellington	Christchurch	Total
	n	n	n	n	n
Afghan	9	0	0	6	15
Burmese	17	0	0	0	17
Ethiopian	7	0	11	0	18
Iranian	11	0	0	20	31
Iraqi	40	0	27	0	67
Somali	9	13	6	0	28
Sri Lankan	32	0	0	0	32
Other	1	0	0	0	1
Total	126	13	44	26	209

2.6.2 Demographics of the sample – *established* refugees

Table 2.5 shows demographic characteristics of the *established* refugees. A large number of *established* refugees were from Iraq, followed by Somalia and Ethiopia. The largest age group was 25 to 39 years (77 people or 41 percent of those interviewed), while 44 individuals were aged between 15 and 24 years and 58 were 40 years or older. Fifty-three percent were male and 47 percent were female.

Table 2.5 Characteristics of *established* refugees

	Total	
	n	%
Nationality		
Ethiopian	41	22
Iranian	4	2
Iraqi	76	40
Somali	44	23
Sri Lankan	12	6
Vietnamese	12	6
Age group		
Under 15 years	10	5
15 to 24 years	44	23
25 to 39 years	77	41
40 to 64 years	54	29
65 years and over	4	2
Gender		
Male	101	53
Female	88	47
Total	189	100

Table 2.6 shows that just over 60 percent of interviews with *established* refugees took place in Auckland, mainly due to the large numbers resettling there and also because a number had moved to Auckland from other areas. The interviews in Auckland were with a more diverse range of nationalities than in other centres.

Table 2.6 Nationalities of *established* refugees by urban region

Nationality	Urban region				
	Auckland n	Hamilton n	Wellington n	Christchurch n	Total n
Ethiopian	24	0	7	10	41
Iranian	4	0	0	0	4
Iraqi	49	0	27	0	76
Somali	17	10	7	10	44
Sri Lankan	12	0	0	0	12
Vietnamese	12	0	0	0	12
Total	118	10	41	20	189

Source: The nationalities listed above are taken from the DoL's immigration database.

2.7 PROCEDURES

The research was based on structured interviews focused on the resettlement issues identified in the literature review and by the Advisory Group. Focus groups (see

Table 2.7 below) were carried out to supplement the data from the questionnaire and explore certain issues in more depth.

2.7.1 Research associates

A key aspect of the research design was the recruitment and training of 19 research associates. The research associates were selected from the participating communities and a number of the research associates were refugees themselves. The research associates undertook the interviews in the first language of the participants, and had the additional benefit of being familiar with the cultures of the study participants. They also assisted with concept-testing the questions used in the research and assisted with translating material such as information sheets for participants into the various languages.

An extensive recruitment process for the research associates was implemented based on the sampling frame. Research associates were employed from each community where interviews were to take place. Supervisors were recruited in each urban region and a programme of ongoing training was provided starting with a two-day intensive workshop. The research associates received training in general research skills including administering questionnaires, interview skills, ethical issues in research and field procedures. The supervisors provided day to day support and ongoing training on research procedures and ethics. Additional workshop training for research associates was held prior to subsequent rounds of interviewing.

The research associates often had leadership or advocate roles in their own communities, for example, some worked with NGOs such as the RMS. Research associates were required to distinguish between their role as a community advocate and that of a researcher. The potential conflict between desire for meaningful information and participation, and ensuring the highest quality of research was managed through the research supervision process.

The training and processes put in place for the research associates ensured they were in a position to assist the research participants to understand the purpose of the research, the questions asked and why particular areas of inquiry were important. The research associates were also able to give participants confidence and comfort in the research process.

2.7.2 Research supervisors

As noted above, in each urban region where interviews were conducted a supervisor was recruited to provide ongoing training and support to the research associates. The four supervisors were academics with a strong interest in the research. They worked to help the research associates address issues as they arose and to assist with the separation of this project as a research endeavour (with the associated need for ethics, rigour and accuracy) from any other role they may have had in the community. One on one and group supervision sessions were provided.

2.7.3 The survey instrument

The interview instrument was a paper-based questionnaire with both open and close-ended questions. It covered a number of different topics based on the information needs of the different stakeholder groups. Given that this was the first research

project of its type, there was potential for a large questionnaire covering many topics.⁸ To be able to cover the range of topics identified as information needs, a decision was made to focus on *general* rather than *specific* areas of resettlement. However, this decision means there was a trade-off in favour of breadth over depth. The final questionnaire covered the following topics:

- Basic demographics and family
- Coming to New Zealand
- Housing
- Getting help
- Teenagers
- Health and children's health
- Education and children's education
- Labour market participation
- Unemployment
- Family reunification
- Languages and learning English
- Income
- Social networks and support
- Discrimination
- Information about New Zealand prior to arrival
- Maintaining own culture
- Satisfaction with life in New Zealand

Extensive consultation was undertaken on the questionnaire design and content. Interviews were undertaken in the first language of the research participants and were completed in 14 different languages, including Amharic, Arabic, Assyrian, Burmese, Dari, Farsi, Kurdish, Somali and Tamil.

2.7.4 Pilot survey

A pilot survey was carried out to test the methodology of the research before it went into the field (including the questionnaire and the use of research associates in various communities). A total of 16 interviews were carried out with participants in Auckland, Hamilton, Christchurch and Wellington.

The pilot testing resulted in only minor changes to the questionnaire, so it was decided to include the pilot information as part of the main analysis. There were a small number of questions that were asked in the main survey but not in the pilot survey (this is indicated in the appropriate parts of this report).

2.7.5 Interview statistics

About half of the interviews with *recently arrived* refugees at six months took between one and two hours and an equal number were over two hours and up to five hours long. Interviews with the *recently arrived* refugees at two years tended to take a shorter time, with around 60 percent taking two hours or less.⁹

⁸ A number of other research projects have been undertaken in this area, however, this was the first large-scale research project describing refugee resettlement in New Zealand.

⁹ Interviews were shorter in the second wave of interviews because some questions were not asked again (for example, some demographic data did not need to be collected again). Also, at the second wave, participants were more familiar with the interview process.

Around 60 percent of interviews with *established* refugees took between two and four hours, while just under 40 percent took between one and two hours. Some interviews were lengthy due to cultural considerations and interruptions such as phone calls and meal preparation. Also, at times, a number of other matters were covered in the interviews. For participants who had little or no understanding of research in general, the research associates had to take time to explain research processes.

2.7.6 Focus groups

In addition to the individual interviews, 14 focus groups were completed to investigate issues arising from the interviews in more depth. Focus groups were used to explore the issues for Burmese refugees living in Nelson, men, women, teenagers and service providers. The focus groups are summarised in Table 2.7 below. The findings from the focus groups are incorporated throughout the report.

Table 2.7 Description of focus groups

Group	Description
Burmese refugees in Nelson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Men and women (in 2001 and 2003)
Men	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Burmese men living in Auckland ▪ Kurdish men living in Christchurch
Women	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Iranian women living in Auckland ▪ Somali women living in Auckland
Teenagers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Afghan teenagers living in Auckland ▪ Somali teenagers living in Wellington ▪ Burmese teenagers living in Nelson (in 2001 and 2003)
Service providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Service providers in Mangere ▪ Service providers in the wider Auckland region ▪ Service providers in Wellington ▪ Service providers in Christchurch

A focus group was also held with the research associates at the end of the interview process. This provided an opportunity for them to discuss key themes that came through in each section of the questionnaire and to give feedback on the interview process, including how certain questions were interpreted by the research participants. This meeting provided some context to issues arising from the questionnaire and the focus groups. The feedback from the research associates is included throughout the report.

2.7.7 Data analysis

Analytical processes included triangulation of data from multiple sources. The findings from in-depth interviews, focus groups and workshops with the research associates were brought together to ensure rigour in data analysis and interpretation. The data was analysed using Access and N5.¹⁰ Through this inductive process, salient categories and themes emerged and have been discussed in this report.

2.8 CULTURAL ISSUES

There were many complexities to consider in working with the diverse communities that took part in the research. For example, the group of participants who came from

¹⁰ Access is a relational database that provides a way of storing, organising and querying large amounts of data. N5 is a qualitative analysis package designed to assist with searching and exploring patterns in data and recording and linking ideas and interpretations of the data.

Iraq included Arabic, Kurdish, Assyrian and Chaldean ethnicities, all with different cultures and languages. The research associates managed many of the cultural issues that arose. For example, in some cases it was not appropriate for a male research associate to interview a female alone (or vice versa). A Somali research associate managed this by interviewing at her own house with her family present, and an Iraqi male research associate would take his wife to interviews when interviewing women on their own.

While there were many advantages to using research associates from the participating communities, in some cases this proved disadvantageous. The refugee communities who took part in the research varied in their size and degree of cohesiveness. Some factions were present within communities, often aligned to social, ethnic and religious factors in their home countries. This impacted on the research. In one case, a Research Associate was forced to resign as no one in the community would be interviewed by him. In more cohesive communities it was much easier for the research associates to gain entry.

2.9 INTERVIEW CONTEXT

It is important to note the possible bias in the answers from refugees. Having left their countries and, in some cases, having lived in refugee camps, refugees will be grateful for having the opportunity to start a new life in a new land. Therefore, they may not want to be too critical or they may phrase their responses so they do not seem ungrateful.

The research was undertaken by the DoL, who have played a key role in the refugees coming to New Zealand and who the refugees depend on to reunite their families. Although the refugees were informed that participating in the research would have no impact on their residence status or their ability to sponsor family to New Zealand, it is possible that the perception of power and authority of the DoL influenced the research participants' responses in some areas. Furthermore, the research associates were people who, in some cases, had leadership roles in their communities. Participants, while not necessarily intimidated, may have felt obligated to be positive and to give positive answers to questions.

There may also be self-reporting bias in questions where refugees were asked to rate themselves. This is particularly so for the health rating as well as what languages they can speak well.

The interviews were conducted in the research participants' first languages and then translated into English. There are limitations to consider when collecting data in one language and presenting findings in another. For example, words which exist in English may not exist in another language and some concepts are not equivalent in different cultures.

2.10 INTERPRETATION OF THE DATA

While the results of this research project give a rich overview of refugee resettlement in New Zealand, no attempt should be made to generalise the findings to the wider refugee population in New Zealand. Refugee flows show volatility in terms of nationality. These results apply specifically to the nationalities of those entering New

Zealand during the selection period. It was reassuring that very similar themes emerged for both the established and newly arrived refugees. This indicates that the patterns of resettlement identified were common refugee experience.

Throughout the report, analysis has been undertaken by looking at the proportions of those who responded to particular questions. The percentages are intended to give an idea about the proportion of those interviewed and may, at times, refer to quite small numbers. Numbers are included in tables and figures so that the reader is able to determine exactly how many participants responded to each question. Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number and for this reason column and row percentages may not always add to 100 percent.

Not all participants answered all questions. The number who did not respond to a particular question is presented as a note to each table or figure. If no such note appears, this indicates a 100 percent response rate.

Tables and figures are generally analysed by five key variables: refugee type, location in New Zealand, gender, age or region of origin. Because of the smaller numbers interviewed outside of Auckland, analysis relating to location in New Zealand compares those in Auckland (including Auckland, Manukau, North Shore and Waitakere) with those outside of Auckland (including Hamilton, Wellington [Wellington, Porirua, Hutt City and Upper Hutt] and Christchurch).

Analysis relating to region of origin draws together four main regional groupings, namely: the Middle East, the Horn of Africa, South East Asia and South Asia. The Middle East includes research participants from Iran, Iraq and Afghanistan, the Horn of Africa includes Ethiopia, Eritrea and Somalia, South East Asia includes Burma/Myanmar and Vietnam and South Asia includes Sri Lanka.

The research participants represented a number of different ethnic groups. In order to protect the confidentiality of those being interviewed, some ethnicities have been drawn together to form larger groupings. This means that Ethiopians will include those that classified themselves as Oromo, Amaharic, and Ethiopian, and Iraqi includes those who classified themselves as Iraqi, Arab, Assyrian and Chaldean. Kurdish people classified themselves as either Kurdish, Iranian or Iraqi and were grouped according to the ethnicity they gave (see Appendix 3).

2.11 ETHICS

Refugees are a particularly vulnerable group meaning that the ethical design of this project was undertaken in a very deliberate manner. A Code of Ethics was developed and circulated for comment. The Code (attached as Appendix 2) included standard social science ethics such as:

- informed consent free of coercion;
- confidentiality of the research participants;
- respect for the privacy of individuals taking part in the research;
- minimisation of risk of harm to the participant; and
- avoidance of conflict of interest.

In addition to the standards set out above, the Code included measures for working with vulnerable participants. These measures included providing information about the research, and the questions they would be asked, in their own language.

As the research was carried out in a cross-cultural context and with individuals who have been in difficult situations which may have caused trauma, it was particularly important to pay close attention to the way in which the research was carried out. Procedures were put in place to ensure that in circumstances where an interview raised trauma for participants, they were supported. Research associates were provided with information about trauma and trauma counsellors were contracted in each centre that the research was taking place. Any Research Associate or participant considered to be facing trauma would be referred to the counsellors at no cost to themselves. During the research period, one person was referred to a counsellor.

Every effort was made to ensure that contributing to this research was a positive experience in which participants were able to tell their stories in a supportive environment. Vulnerability and lack of expertise in the mental health area meant that questions were not asked about mental health or about the specific circumstances that led participants to become refugees. It was considered that these questions may have caused retraumatisation for some.

An issue that arose during the research was maintaining the confidentiality of potential participants within the refugee communities. In some cases the physical address and phone contact information provided to research associates was not accurate and the only way to find the potential respondent was to ask around the community. After much discussion, it was decided that research associates could tell community members that they were looking for a particular person to participate in the research. However, after the participant was located, they could not disclose whether or not the person had participated.

In terms of interview administration procedures, information was provided to participants about what the research was about and what their involvement would be, and it specified that participation was voluntary. If they agreed to participate, written informed consent was then gained and the interview completed. Participants aged 13 to 16 years gave their written consent and consent of a parent or caregiver was also required. Participants had a two-week period, after each interview, during which they could withdraw their permission to participate. To ensure confidentiality in the research, participants were given an interview code. This was the identifying feature on the questionnaires. Two researchers in the DoL had access to the questionnaires. The questionnaires were stored securely and will be destroyed on completion of the report.

02

BACKGROUND

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SECTION 02

This section describes the skills and experiences refugees brought to New Zealand and the information and expectations they had about the country before arrival. The arrival experiences of the research participants are also explored. Having an understanding of the refugees' backgrounds provides a backdrop against which the research participants' resettlement experiences in New Zealand can be understood. It also helps in drawing interpretations and meaning about these experiences.

The research participants were from very diverse backgrounds and brought a wide range of experiences, languages, skills and education with them to New Zealand. These factors have a large impact on resettlement outcomes and help determine the initial period of adjustment.

Refugees, in general, come to New Zealand ill-prepared for life in a new country. They know very little about their new country prior to arrival. Quota refugees may only be given information about New Zealand when they are told that they have an interview with the New Zealand Immigration Service. During this interview, they receive some limited information about the country and its customs.

Family Reunion refugees usually know more about New Zealand as they are sponsored by people living in New Zealand. Since Convention refugees often arranged to come to New Zealand through an intermediary, it was not known how much information they would have about New Zealand before arrival.

Whether they are Convention, Quota or Family Reunion refugees, they arrive in New Zealand with a variety of needs, ranging from practical to personal. Practical needs include accommodation and household effects, employment, financial support, language classes, access to appropriate healthcare and educational opportunities, and information about New Zealand laws and customs. Personal needs include the reunification of families, recognition and understanding of the trauma they have endured, friendship and the support of the community that they live in. Of course, these are intertwined in a complex suite of emotions and experiences which come together in the resettlement process.

3 REFUGEE BACKGROUNDS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter explores the background of the research participants, including their language ability, education and work experience. The experiences of those who had spent time in refugee camps are also described. (For an overview of the situations and countries the participants came from, see 1.6). The topics covered in this chapter include:

- how refugees arrive in New Zealand;
- refugee camps;
- languages;
- education prior to arrival;
- work prior to arrival; and
- activities in the 12 months prior to arrival.

Key themes

- ➔ Sixty-nine *recently arrived* refugees (mostly Quota refugees) had spent time in refugee camps before coming to New Zealand. Nearly half had spent more than five years in a refugee camp including 11 people who had spent 16 years or more in a camp. Some had access to services in camps, such as education and healthcare, while others found it difficult to access anything beyond very basic humanitarian services.
- ➔ Participants had wide ranging linguistic skills, with 67 percent of *recently arrived* refugees and 91 percent of *established* refugees able to speak two or more languages well. Refugees often could speak a language well, but not necessarily write or read it well. A number of Quota refugees could not read or write in any language.
- ➔ Fifteen percent of *recently arrived* refugees and 18 percent of *established* refugees had spent no time in formal education before coming to New Zealand. Women had generally spent less time in education prior to arrival than men (particularly for Quota refugees). Most of the Quota refugees who had no formal education had spent time in refugee camps.
- ➔ Sixty percent of the *recently arrived* refugees and 57 percent of the *established* refugees had worked before coming to New Zealand. Around one third of both groups had at least ten years work experience.
- ➔ Convention refugees stood out from other participants in a number of areas. They could read and write more languages, had more pre-arrival education, had more prior work experience and none had spent time in refugee camps. As a number were Sri Lankan, these findings could be country specific.
- ➔ One quarter of *recently arrived* refugees worked in a trade prior to arrival, 20 percent in a professional occupation and 17 percent in service and sales. Just under a quarter of *established* refugees worked in service and sales before coming to New Zealand and a similar proportion worked in a trade. It may be difficult for refugees to work in their previous occupation in New Zealand, as they will often need proof of their work experience and qualifications and will sometimes need to get their qualifications recognised. It is difficult for refugees to provide the necessary documentation.

One quarter of recently arrived refugees worked in a Trade prior to arrival.

3.2 HOW REFUGEES ARRIVE IN NEW ZEALAND

The three broad groups of refugees that took part in this research followed very different paths to New Zealand. The Quota refugees were recommended for resettlement by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The Convention refugees had undergone a detailed interview by the Refugee Status Branch (RSB) of the Department of Labour (DoL) to determine their status as refugees (and were sometimes granted refugee status after an appeal process). Until determination, Convention refugees are called asylum seekers. They find their own way to New Zealand, at times using false documentation. Family Reunion refugees are not determined to be refugees. As noted earlier, there has been little information about them, but they come from similar circumstances to those determined to be refugees. For example, they may have come from situations of political unrest, terror, violence and/or war and have spent time in refugee camps. They were sponsored by close family members already resident in New Zealand.

3.3 REFUGEE CAMPS

Information on refugee camps and the individuals in them was available from the UNHCR as well as through the New Zealand Immigration Service (NZIS). These sources, as well as feedback from the research participants who had spent time in camps, have been used to provide an overview of experiences.

Life in camps can, at times, be dangerous, and refugees are often at risk of violence. A UNHCR paper highlighted violence in two camps in the north-west of Kenya (Kakuma and Dadaab), where many Somali and Sudanese refugees reside. The paper pointed out that:

“It is impossible to quantify the amount of violence that takes place in and around Kenya’s refugee camps. It is clear, however, that security incidents involving death and serious injury take place on a daily basis.” (UNHCR, December 1999)

The Somali and Ethiopian research participants, who spent some time in camps, had been in Ethiopia, Kenya and Sudan. The majority of Burmese refugees in this study came from Maneeloy refugee camp in Thailand.

Thailand has not signed the United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees which means that the UNHCR had no jurisdiction over the welfare of refugees in Thailand. Maneeloy was closed in 2002 with many refugees being resettled to third countries including New Zealand and the United States of America.

The Kurdish refugees in this research who had spent time in camps had come from Al Tash refugee camp in Iraq. The camp was established in 1981 and initially run by the Iraqi Ministry of Interior and the International Red Cross. The UNHCR was given responsibility in 1991 to provide assistance in addition to that provided by the Iraqi government. The camp had a rudimentary infrastructure in terms of sanitation and access to basic needs such as water and essential services. Many of the refugees at this camp were Kurdish refugees who

fled to Iraq from Iran during two major refugee influxes from the rural border area of Kemansha province.

3.3.1 What refugees said about their time in refugee camps

A total of 69 *recently arrived* refugees had spent time in refugee camps before coming to New Zealand. Sixty-seven out of the 96 *recently arrived* Quota refugees had spent time in refugee camps, as had two Family Reunion refugees. Thirty of those who had spent time in camps were from the Horn of Africa, 25 were from the Middle East and 14 were from Burma (see Table 3.1). They came from a number of camps including Maneeloy camp in Thailand, Al Tash camp in Iraq, Kakuma and Dadaab camps in Kenya and Qabri-bayah camp in Ethiopia.

Table 3.1 *Recently arrived* refugees who had spent time in refugee camps by nationality

Nationality	Total	
	n	%
Somali	23	33
Iranian	18	26
Burmese	14	20
Afghan	7	10
Ethiopian	7	10
Total number	69	100

About half of the refugees who had spent time in camps (32 individuals) had spent between one to five years, nine had spent six to ten years and 22 had spent 11 or more years in a camp (see Table 3.2). The length of time spent in the camps meant that for some young people living in a refugee camp was all they had known. For example, 13 people under the age of 25 years had spent 11 or more years in refugee camps; six of these had spent 16 years or more.

Twenty-two participants had spent more than 11 years in a refugee camp.

Table 3.2 Length of time *recently arrived* refugees spent in refugee camps by age group

Length of time	Age group		
	Under 25 years	25 years or older	Total
	n	n	n
Less than 1 year	2	3	5
1 to 5 years	13	19	32
6 to 10 years	3	6	9
11 to 15 years	7	4	11
16 years or more	6	5	11
Total number	31	37	68

Note

1. One did not know.

Access to basic services such as healthcare, housing and food is important for those living in camps. Most commented that there had been some services in the camp, mainly relating to health, education and training. A number also mentioned access to interpreters and food rations. Ten individuals said they had no access to any services.

Burmese refugees who took part in a focus group had spent time in Maneeloy camp. While they were impressed with the education provided by a NGO and

the good sanitation at the camp, they did not like other aspects of the camp, such as a lack of services for children and difficulties experienced obtaining the medicines they required.

“There was one good programme for me, ‘self-sufficient farming, gardening programme’, implemented by NGO and International Rescue Committee.”

Burmese Quota refugee, six months

Twenty-seven of the 69 refugees were able to engage in study or training, some of them going outside the camp to the local school. This ranged from English language training, basic schooling (some to secondary school level), and some vocational education.

Twenty-two refugees said that they had worked while in the camp. Half of these had paid work while a similar number did unpaid work. The work ranged from teaching to distributing food in the camp.

“I did paid work sewing clothes. I did volunteer work with the group of women, teaching about the camp.”

Kurdish Quota refugee, six months

Overall, these refugees indicated a diversity of experiences. Some were able to live their lives in a community while others found it difficult to access anything beyond very basic humanitarian services. Time spent in camps where the refugees had limited choice or freedom of movement, and had to fight for basic amenities, is likely to have a profound impact on their resettlement experiences once in New Zealand. A number of the participants who had spent time in refugee camps said they had no education before coming to New Zealand (see Section 3.5). As is discussed in Chapter 4, those in refugee camps often found it difficult to access information about New Zealand.

3.4 LANGUAGES

Most refugees come from non-English speaking backgrounds. Having moved across borders, they often speak their own language as well as the language of the country they were residing in before coming to New Zealand. With many not having had opportunities to attend school regularly, there are wide-ranging differences in refugees’ ability to speak, read and write languages.

3.4.1 Languages *recently arrived* refugees communicated in well

Figure 3.1 shows the number of languages that *recently arrived* refugees were able to communicate well in at six months. About one third of these refugees said that they were able to speak two languages well (that is, have a conversation about a lot of everyday things). Another third were able to speak three or more languages well. The number who were able to read and write well in multiple languages was lower. Forty-three percent could read well in two or more languages and 29 percent could write well in two or more languages.¹¹

Two thirds of recently arrived refugees could speak two or more languages well. One in ten could not read or write well.

¹¹ The questions asked about speaking, reading and writing well were as follows:

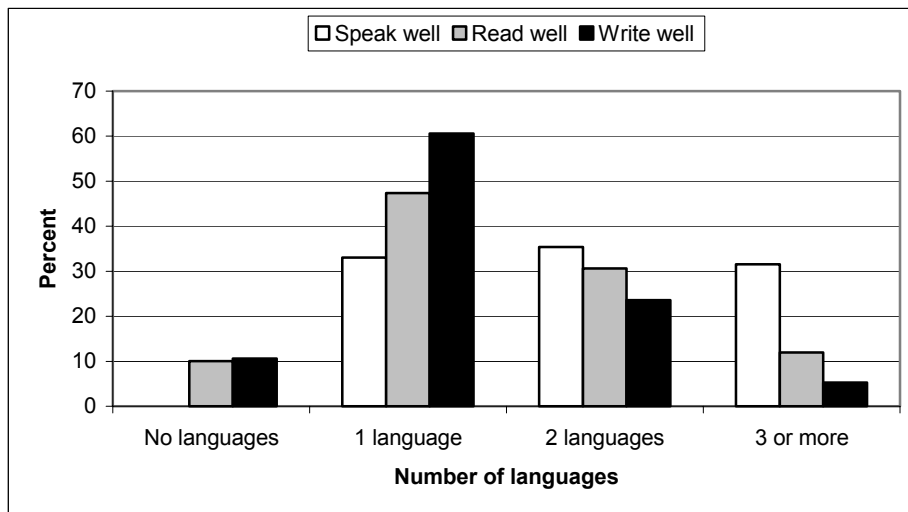
Speaking – “What languages can you speak well, that is, in what languages can you have a conversation about a lot of everyday things?”

Reading – “What languages can you read a newspaper in, that is, the languages in which you can understand the articles that you read?”

Writing - “What languages can you write a letter in, that is, the language or languages in which you can express a lot of everyday thoughts in writing?”

Ten percent of those interviewed said they were not able to read well and 11 percent were not able to write well in any language. In the majority of cases, those who could not read or write well were the same people. That one in ten of these participants could not read and/or write well in their own language has implications for their ability to learn English, and subsequently their resettlement.

Figure 3.1 Language skills of recently arrived refugees at six months $n=209$



Note

1. At six months, one did not know what languages they could write well.

There were differences between refugee groups, with Family Reunion refugees being able to speak more languages well and Convention refugees being able to read and write more languages well. The majority of Family Reunion refugees were from the Middle East and, as is noted below (see Table 3.4), participants from this region had the most wide-ranging language abilities. All Convention refugees were able to read and write well in at least one language, while 16 Quota and four Family Reunion refugees were not able to read well in any language. Similar numbers could not write well (see Table A.4.2 in Appendix 4).

The number of years of education impacted on the number of languages *recently arrived* refugees were able to speak (Table 3.3). Those with no formal education prior to coming to New Zealand were less likely to speak two or more languages than were those with some education. Many of those with no prior education were female Quota refugees and those who had spent time in refugee camps.

Table 3.3 Number of languages spoken by *recently arrived* refugees by number of years in education prior to coming to New Zealand

Number of languages	Number of years prior education					
	No prior education		1 to 10 years		10 or more years	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
1 language	19	66	21	32	24	24
2 languages	7	24	26	39	39	40
3 or more languages	3	10	19	29	35	36
Total participants	29	100	66	100	98	100

Note

1. Does not include those 14 years or younger.
2. Five did not respond and one did not know.

Refugees from all regions had wide-ranging spoken language ability. Eighty-one of the 113 refugees from the Middle East said they were able to speak two or more languages well.

Table 3.4 shows the number of languages *recently arrived* refugees could speak well by region of origin. A number of participants from all regions were able to speak more than one language well, with those from the Horn of Africa having the least diverse language ability. Nineteen out of the 46 participants from the Horn of Africa said they could speak two or more languages well. By comparison, of the 113 participants from the Middle East, 32 said they could speak one language well, 41 could speak two languages well and 40 said they could speak three or more languages well.

Table 3.4 Number of languages *recently arrived* refugees could speak well at six months by region

Number of languages	Region				
	Middle East	Horn of Africa	South Asia	South East Asia	Total
	n	n	n	n	n
1	32	27	8	3	70
2	41	12	14	7	74
3	33	7	10	7	57
4	6	0	0	1	7
5	1	0	0	0	1
Total	113	46	32	18	209

While the range of languages will change year by year depending on the countries refugees come from, there can be little doubt that New Zealand is increasing in its linguistic diversity.

The different languages that *recently arrived* refugees were able to speak, read and write well are listed in Table 3.5. The diversity is impressive with 33 different languages spoken. These numbers show that there are some languages that were mainly spoken but not much read or written (for example, Assyrian, Kurdish and Sinhala).

The most common language that these participants could speak, read and write well was Arabic (84, 73 and 69 participants respectively). It is of note the number of *recently arrived* refugees who said they could speak, read and write English well at six months (64, 67 and 47 participants respectively), although this is still less than one third of the research participants. The English language

ability of research participants, including methods of learning English and use of interpreters and translators, is explored in detail in Chapter 10.¹²

Table 3.5 Languages recently arrived refugees were able to communicate well in at six months *n*=209

Languages	Communication type		
	Speak well	Read well	Write well
	n	n	n
Arabic	84	73	69
English	64	67	47
Assyrian	45	9	3
Kurdish	32	17	13
Tamil	32	30	29
Somali	28	20	20
Farsi	26	26	20
Burmese	17	13	13
Dari	14	14	13
Amharic	12	13	12
Sinhala	12	4	3
Tigranya	10	3	2
Karen	8	0	1
Thai	8	2	2
Pushtu	6	5	4
Urdu	4	3	2
Oromo	3	3	3
Turkish	2	0	1
Other	14	6	6
None	0	20	21
Total participants	209	209	208

Note

1. At six months, one did not know what languages they could write well.
2. 'Other' languages include; Chinese, French, German, Greek, Guraginya, Hazaragi, Hindi, Khaldani, Kiswahili, Korean, Mon, Pao, Shan, Turkmani and Vietnamese.
3. Participants could give multiple responses.

3.4.2 Main languages spoken at home

The languages spoken by refugees reflect the numbers of people from each nationality in the sample. However, one measure of language use is to look at the main language participants spoke at home (Table 3.6). Assyrian was the most common language used at home at six months (20 percent), followed by Tamil (14 percent), Arabic and Somali (13 percent each) and Kurdish (11 percent). Four percent (mostly Convention refugees) said they spoke English at home. Several participants indicated they spoke more than one main language at home. For example, of the nine participants who said English was the main language spoken at home, five also indicated another 'main' language.

Refugees speak a diverse range of languages in their homes.

There were differences in the main language spoken at home by refugee type, reflecting the various nationalities of these groups. More than half of Family Reunion refugees spoke Assyrian, while more than half of Convention refugees

¹² Research participants were asked further questions about their English language ability and these results are included in Chapter 10. That chapter provides a more robust analysis of participants' English language ability and some participants rated their English language ability differently when asked more probing questions.

spoke Tamil. Twenty-eight percent of Quota refugees spoke Somali and 22 percent spoke Kurdish.

The diversity of languages has flow-on implications for supporting agencies. Providing in-home assistance is challenging with the language and cultural barriers that this analysis implies, especially the need to provide services to the diverse language groups. Language also implies cultural differences that impact on the appropriateness of services provided and the manner in which refugees will take up the services. As is explored later in this report, language ability also has significance for accessing employment opportunities.

Table 3.6 Main language spoken at home by recently arrived refugees at six months *n*=209

Main language spoken at home	Refugee type							
	Quota		Convention		Family Reunion		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Assyrian	2	2	0	0	40	56	42	20
Tamil	0	0	24	57	6	8	30	14
Somali	27	28	1	2	0	0	28	13
Arabic	18	19	2	5	8	11	28	13
Kurdish	21	22	1	2	0	0	22	11
Burmese	13	14	0	0	1	1	14	7
Farsi	1	1	8	19	4	6	13	6
Dari	5	5	1	2	6	8	12	6
English	1	1	8	19	0	0	9	4
Amharic	8	8	0	0	0	0	8	4
Karen	7	7	0	0	0	0	7	3
Tigrinya	4	4	0	0	0	0	4	2
Other	7	7	2	5	6	8	15	7
Total participants	96		42		71		209	

Note

1. Some participants indicated they spoke more than one main language at home and, in those cases, both languages were recorded (therefore the columns add to more than 100 percent). Sixteen participants said they spoke two main languages at home and two participants said they spoke three main languages at home.
2. 'Other' languages included Shan, Kaldani, Orominya, Pushto, Thai, Chinese, Hazaragi and Vietnamese.

3.4.3 Languages established refugees communicated in well

Figure 3.2 shows the number of languages *established* refugees could communicate in well. This group had wide-ranging linguistic skills, with 52 percent able to speak three or more languages well and another 39 percent able to speak two or more languages well. Thirty-one percent of *established* refugees indicated that they could write two languages well and 13 percent could write three or more languages well. Thirty-eight percent could read two languages well and another 21 percent could read three or more languages well. Six percent of *established* refugees said they were not able to read well in any language and 8 percent said they could not write well.

Figure 3.2 Language skills of established refugees n=189

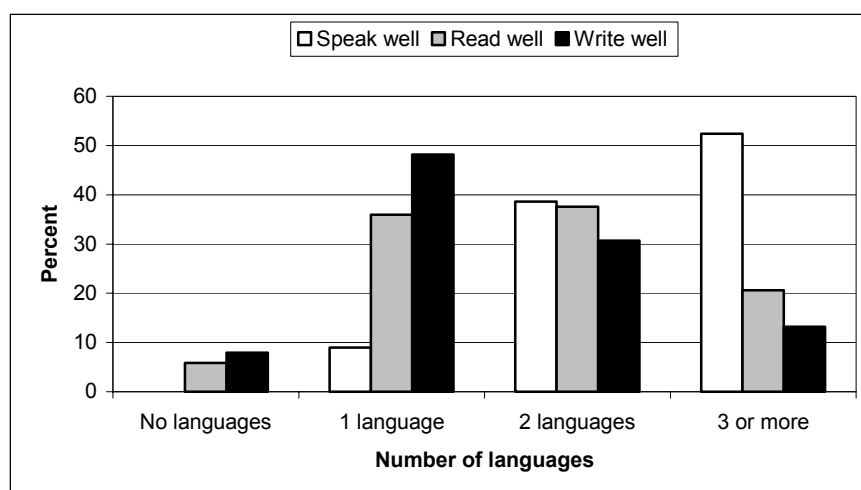


Table 3.7 shows the languages *established* refugees were able to communicate in well. As with *recently arrived* refugees, many *established* refugees indicated that they could speak some languages well, but not necessarily read or write the language well (including Amharic, Arabic, Assyrian, English, Kurdish and Tigrinya). Of the 189 *established* refugees, 141 individuals indicated they could speak English well, 125 could read English well and 103 could write English well.

Table 3.7 Languages established refugees were able to communicate in well n=189

Languages	Communication type		
	Speak well	Read well	Write well
	n	n	n
English	141	125	103
Arabic	98	59	46
Kurdish	47	18	17
Somali	45	39	39
Amharic	40	31	30
Assyrian	39	7	5
Tigrinya	20	10	5
Farsi	16	10	10
Tamil	12	9	9
Vietnamese	12	12	11
Urdu	6	2	1
Hindu	5	0	0
Turkish	5	0	0
Oromo	1	1	0
Other	16	10	6
None	0	11	15
Total participants	189	189	189

Note

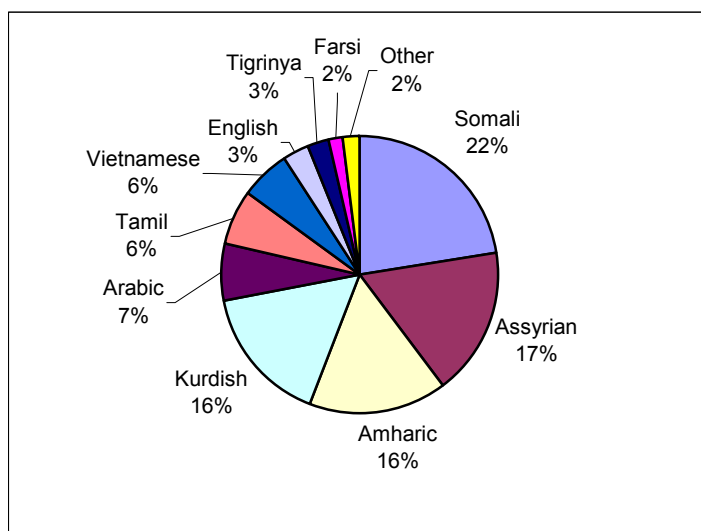
1. 'Other' languages include French, German, Greek, Hazaragi, Hindi, Italian, Khaldani, Kiswahili, Oromo, Russian, Spanish, Thai and Turkish.
2. Participants could give multiple responses.

Established refugees at five years were still much more likely to speak languages other than English at home.

Figure 3.3 shows the main languages *established* refugees spoke at home. The main languages spoken at home were Somali (22 percent), Assyrian (17 percent) and Amharic and Kurdish (16 percent each). While many *established* refugees

said they could communicate well in English (see Table 3.7 above), only 3 percent indicated that English was the main language spoken at home.

Figure 3.3 Main language spoken at home by *established* refugees $n=189$



Note

1. Two participants indicated that they spoke two languages at home and, in this case, both languages were recorded. 'Other' languages included, Kaldani, Orominya, Burmese, Chinese, Dari, Hazaragi, Karen, Pashtu, Shan and Thai.

3.5 EDUCATION BEFORE ARRIVAL IN NEW ZEALAND

Some refugees had taken part in schooling and post-school education prior to arrival. They also had a variety of qualifications. Refugees who spent time in refugee camps may have had access to education although this depends on the services available or the rules relating to accessing these services in the wider host community. Some refugees were highly educated while others either came from countries where schooling was not universally available or did not have an opportunity to participate in education due to their circumstances. Most participants had completed some form of education before coming to New Zealand, however 15 percent of *recently arrived* and 18 percent of *established* refugees indicated they had spent no time in education prior to arrival.

3.5.1 Schooling prior to arrival in New Zealand

Recently arrived and *established* refugees were asked how many years they had spent in full-time education before coming to New Zealand.¹³ Of the *recently arrived* refugees, most had some education although 15 percent had none. *Recently arrived* Quota refugees had less pre-arrival education than Convention or Family Reunion refugees, with 26 percent having no education and another 21 percent having completed only between one and five years (see Table 3.8). Twenty-six percent of this group had 11 or more years education. Convention refugees had a considerably higher education level, with 76 percent having 11 or more years education. Fifty-eight percent of *recently arrived* Family Reunion refugees had 11 or more years education before arriving in New Zealand. As a rough guide, completing primary school would generally account for around

¹³ Of the *established* refugees, only those aged 17 years and over were asked questions in the education section.

eight years of full-time education and secondary school would account for around 13 years of full-time education.

Recently arrived refugees from the Horn of Africa were more likely than other participants to have had no formal education. Thirty-eight percent of this group said they had spent no time in education compared to 13 percent from the Middle East and one participant from South East Asia. All South Asians had at least some, with 75 percent saying they had spent 11 or more years in education.

Nearly all of the Quota refugees who had no formal education before coming to New Zealand were the same individuals who had spent time in refugee camps. Nineteen out of the 22 Quota refugees who had no education had spent time in camps, including 12 from the Horn of Africa, six from the Middle East and one from South East Asia.

Table 3.8 Number of years full-time education before arrival in New Zealand for *recently arrived* refugees by refugee type and region

Years in education	Refugee type							
	Quota		Convention		Family Reunion		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
0	22	26	0	0	7	11	29	15
1 to 5	18	21	1	2	4	6	23	12
6 to 10	24	28	9	22	17	26	50	26
11 to 15	17	20	22	54	31	47	70	36
Over 15	5	6	9	22	7	11	21	11
Total	86	100	41	100	66	100	193	100
Years in education	Region of origin							
	Middle East		Horn of Africa		South Asia		South East Asia	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
0	13	13	15	38	0	0	1	6
1 to 5	9	9	8	20	1	3	5	29
6 to 10	28	27	9	23	7	22	6	35
11 to 15	43	41	7	18	15	47	5	29
Over 15	11	11	1	3	9	28	0	0
Total	104	100	40	100	32	100	17	100

Note

- Five did not respond and one did not know.
- Does not include those 14 years or younger.

Of the *established* refugees, 18 percent had no education before arrival in New Zealand and another 21 percent had between one and five years education. Thirty percent of this group had 11 years education or more (see Table 3.9). As with *recently arrived* refugees, more *established* refugees from the Horn of Africa than other participants had no education before coming to New Zealand. Twenty-nine percent of participants from this region had no education compared to 11 percent from the Middle East and no participants from South or South East Asia.

Table 3.9 Number of years full-time education before arrival in New Zealand for established refugees by region

Years in education	Region of origin									
	Middle East		Horn of Africa		South Asia		South East Asia		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
0	8	11	23	29	0	0	0	0	31	18
1 to 5	19	26	12	15	1	10	4	40	36	21
6 to 10	34	47	14	18	2	20	4	40	54	32
11 to 15	11	15	23	29	7	70	1	10	42	25
over 15	0	0	7	9	0	0	1	10	8	5
Total	72	100	79	100	10	100	10	100	171	100

Note

1. Two did not know.
2. Does not include those 16 years or younger.

The fact that a sizeable number of participants had completed five or less years in education has implications for the level of educational services that should be provided in New Zealand. Given the diversity of experiences, it is unlikely that a ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach would be successful. Acclimatisation to a learning environment for some would be a necessary first step. Refugees from the Horn of Africa are more likely to require assistance.

Females had completed fewer years education than males. Much of this difference was accounted for by Quota refugees.

There were gender differences in the amount of time spent in full-time education. *Recently arrived* female refugees had generally spent less time in education than males (see Table 3.10). Twenty-four percent of females had no education prior to arrival compared to 7 percent of males. Forty-one percent of females had spent 11 or more years in education compared to 54 percent of males.

There were particular differences in the time spent in education by refugee type and gender. While the number of years of education was similar for male and female Family Reunion refugees, Quota and Convention refugees accounted for most of the gender differences. Of the Quota refugees, 18 out of 46 females had no education before coming to New Zealand compared to 4 out of 40 males. Nearly three quarters of Convention refugees were male and 22 out of 30 of these individuals had at least 11 years prior education. It was notable that nine out of the 11 female Convention refugees had 11 or more years education.

Table 3.10 Number of years in full-time education before arrival in New Zealand for recently arrived refugees by gender

Years in education	Refugee type							
	Quota		Convention		Family Reunion		Total	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
	n	n	n	n	n	n	%	%
0	4	18	0	0	3	4	7	24
1 to 5	8	10	1	0	2	2	11	13
6 to 10	14	10	7	2	8	9	29	23
11 to 15	11	6	15	7	14	17	40	33
Over 15	3	2	7	2	4	3	14	8
Total	40	46	30	11	31	35	100	100

Note

1. Five did not respond and one did not know.
2. Does not include those 14 years or younger.

Table 3.11 shows the number of years *established* refugees had spent in education before coming to New Zealand by gender. Thirty percent of females had spent no time in education compared with only 8 percent of males. Thirty-eight percent of males had spent 11 or more years in education compared to 19 percent of females.

Table 3.11 Number of years in full-time education before arrival in New Zealand for established refugees by gender

Years in education	Gender			
	Male		Female	
	n	%	n	%
0	7	8	24	30
1 to 5	19	21	17	22
6 to 10	31	34	23	29
11 to 15	28	30	14	18
Over 15	7	8	1	1
Total	92	100	79	100

Note

1. Two people did not know.
2. Does not include those 16 years or younger.

Gender differences in access to prior education means that women are more likely to require assistance with acclimatising to a formal learning environment in New Zealand. Women from countries with rudimentary education systems and some Islamic countries where it is difficult for women to receive an education are particularly likely to need this assistance.

3.5.2 Qualifications completed prior to arrival in New Zealand

Participants were asked if they had gained any qualifications before coming to New Zealand.¹⁴ Of the *recently arrived* refugees, 46 percent of those 15 years or over had completed a qualification prior to arriving in New Zealand. Just over half of the males in the *recently arrived* group had completed a qualification compared to 38 percent of females (see Table 3.12). Much of the variation between genders was accounted for by Quota refugees. Eighteen out of 40 male Quota refugees had a qualification before arrival compared to 10 out of 50 females.

Table 3.12 Qualifications prior to coming to New Zealand for recently arrived refugees by gender

Qualification before arrival	Refugee type							
	Quota		Convention		Family Reunion		Total	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
	n	n	n	n	n	n	%	%
Yes	18	10	20	9	16	17	52	38
No	22	40	11	2	16	18	48	63
Total	40	50	31	11	32	35	100	100

Note

1. Does not include those 14 years or younger.
2. Only the last two columns are percentages.

¹⁴ At six months, refugees were asked about qualifications that took the equivalent of at least three months full-time study.

Of the *established* refugees aged 17 years or older, only 21 percent had completed a qualification prior to arriving in New Zealand (see Table 3.13). Twice the proportion of males than females in this group had completed a qualification.

Table 3.13 Qualifications before arrival in New Zealand for *established* refugees by gender

Qualifications before arrival	Gender					
	Male		Female		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Yes	26	28	11	14	37	21
No	66	72	70	86	136	79
Total	92	100	81	100	173	100

Note

1. Does not include those 16 years or younger.

Just over one half of *recently arrived* refugees and eight in ten *established* refugees had no qualifications prior to coming to New Zealand.

Table 3.14 shows the highest qualification refugees had obtained prior to coming to New Zealand. Fifty-four percent of *recently arrived* refugees had no qualifications, 21 percent had a high or secondary school qualification, 12 percent had a vocational or trade qualification and 11 percent had a Bachelor's degree. For comparison, in the 2001 Census one in four people were recorded as having no qualifications and one in three had post-school qualifications (SNZ, 2002).¹⁵ Quota refugees were the least qualified with 69 percent having no qualifications. Time spent in refugee camps impacted on qualification levels, with 55 out of 62 Quota refugees with no prior qualifications having spent time in camps. Convention refugees were the most qualified with one third having a vocational or trade qualification or higher. Just over half of the Family Reunion refugees had no qualifications prior to arrival, 21 percent had a high school or secondary qualification and the remainder had a post-secondary qualification.

Nearly 80 percent of the *established* refugees had no qualifications before arrival in New Zealand. Twelve percent of this group had a high or secondary school qualification and the remaining 9 percent had a post-secondary qualification.

The ability to obtain an education is closely linked to nationality as some countries have better developed education systems than others. It is also closely linked to the refugees' circumstances, such as time in refugee camps. The longer the refugee has been away from his or her home the less likely it would be that they had obtained a qualification. It is notable that although some refugees are well-qualified, they do not necessarily have a good English language ability.

¹⁵ Relates to the usually resident population aged 15 years and over.

Table 3.14 Highest qualification prior to arrival in New Zealand

Highest qualification before arrival	Refugee type									
	Recently arrived								Established	
	Quota		Convention		Family Reunion		Total			
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
No qualifications	62	69	12	29	34	51	108	54	136	79
High school or secondary school	12	13	16	38	14	21	42	21	21	12
Vocational or trade	8	9	4	10	12	18	24	12	9	5
Bachelor's degree	6	7	9	21	6	9	21	11	6	3
Post-graduate degree	0	0	1	2	1	1	2	1	1	1
Other	2	2	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	0
Total	90	100	42	100	67	100	199	100	173	100

Note

1. 'Other' includes primary education.
2. Does not include those 14 years or younger for *recently arrived* refugees or 16 years or younger for *established* refugees.

Of the 47 *recently arrived* refugees who had a post-secondary qualification, eight individuals had a teaching diploma, eight had a Bachelor's degree in a science subject (including engineering and maths), five had a diploma in engineering or science and five had a Bachelor's degree in commerce or business. One person had a PhD in medicine. The remaining individuals had diplomas, degrees and certificates in a range of fields. Of the 16 *established* refugees with a post-secondary qualification, four had Bachelor's degrees in a science subject (including engineering) and three had teaching diplomas. There was a range of other qualifications, with one person having a Master's degree in Forestry.

It is important that refugees are not seen as being uniformly uneducated or having little to offer. It is evident that many are well-qualified which reinforces the need to see beyond the refugee status to the attributes and potential of the individual.

3.6 WORK BEFORE ARRIVAL IN NEW ZEALAND

Working is an important component of resettlement. It assists with building self-esteem and also enables independence from income support. When refugees come to New Zealand, many expect they will be able to find work. Some have a substantial amount of work experience. Sixty percent of the *recently arrived* refugees had worked before they came to New Zealand (that is they had taken part in paid work for one hour or more per week). Eight out of every ten Convention refugees had worked, while six out of ten Family Reunion refugees and five out of ten Quota refugees had worked. Of the *established* refugees, 57 percent indicated that they had worked before coming to New Zealand. Some *established* refugees would have been too young before coming to New Zealand to have gained work experience. It is important to note that participants

indicating they had not worked may have been productive, they were just not in a paying job.

Table 3.15 Work before arrival in New Zealand

Worked before coming to New Zealand	Refugee group									
	Recently arrived								Established	
	Quota		Convention		Family Reunion		Total			
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Yes	44	49	33	80	35	60	112	60	94	57
No	45	51	8	20	23	40	76	40	72	43
Total	89	100	41	100	58	100	188	100	166	100

Note

1. One *recently arrived* refugee did not respond. Nine *established* refugees did not respond.
2. Does not include those 14 years or younger for *recently arrived* refugees or 16 years or younger for *established* refugees.

As expected, for both the *recently arrived* and *established* refugees, males were more likely to have worked than females before coming to New Zealand (see Table 3.16).

Table 3.16 Work before arrival in New Zealand by gender

Worked before coming to New Zealand	Refugee type							
	Recently arrived				Established			
	Female		Male		Female		Male	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Yes	41	45	71	73	30	38	64	73
No	50	55	26	27	48	62	24	27
Total	91	100	97	100	78	100	88	100

Note

1. One *recently arrived* refugee did not respond. Nine *established* refugees did not respond.
2. Does not include those 14 years or younger for the *recently arrived* refugees or those 16 years or younger for the *established* refugees.

As shown in Table 3.17, of the *recently arrived* refugees who had worked before arrival in New Zealand, most had worked for two or more years. Around half had worked for between two and ten years and another third had worked for ten or more years. Most of those who had worked for less than two years were Quota refugees. They were, on average, younger than the other groups included in this research which helps explain their lower prior work experience.¹⁶ The *established* refugees had a similar work history to the *recently arrived* refugees with most having worked for two years or more prior to arrival.

¹⁶ Forty-three Quota refugees were under the age of 25 years as were three Convention refugees and 15 Family Reunion refugees (see Table 2.3, Chapter 2).

Table 3.17 Number of years in paid work prior to arrival in New Zealand

Number of years work	Refugee type						
	Recently arrived					Established	
	Quota	Convention	Family Reunion	Total	Total	Total	Total
	n	n	n	n	%	n	%
Less than one year	3	1	2	6	5	5	5
1 year to less than 2 years	12	2	0	14	12	10	10
2 years to less than 4 years	7	6	10	23	20	15	16
4 years to less than 10 years	13	9	10	32	28	38	40
10 years to less than 20 years	7	10	6	23	20	17	18
20 years or more	4	2	11	17	15	11	11
Total	46	30	39	115	100	96	100

Note

1. Three *recently arrived* refugees did not know how long they had previously worked for.

3.6.1 Main occupation before arrival in New Zealand

Before coming to New Zealand, the refugees had worked in a variety of occupations (see Table 3.18). One quarter of the *recently arrived* refugees were working in a trade (such as a mechanic or carpenter). Twenty percent were working in professional occupations and 17 percent were working in service and sales. Just under a quarter of *established* refugees worked in service and sales before coming to New Zealand and a similar proportion worked in a trade.

One quarter of recently arrived refugees had worked before arrival in a Trade and one fifth in a Profession.

In order to work in many of these occupations in New Zealand, refugees would require evidence of their qualifications and work experience. In most cases, such documentation would be difficult for refugees to access, for example, they may not have had the chance to gather this information before leaving their former countries. Refugees' qualifications may not be recognised in New Zealand, meaning they would need to do further study to work in their previous occupation. These factors, along with English language ability and lack of New Zealand work experience make it difficult for refugees to work in the occupation they were previously employed in. The occupations of those who were working in New Zealand are noted in Chapter 12.

Table 3.18 Occupation before arrival

Occupation before arrival	Refugee type						
	<i>Recently arrived</i>				<i>Established</i>		
	Quota	Convention	Family Reunion	Total	Total	Total	Total
	n	n	n	n	%	n	%
Legislators, administrators and managers	1	4	1	6	5	5	5
Professionals	11	5	8	24	20	10	10
Technicians and associate professionals	2	3	2	7	6	10	10
Clerks	4	3	5	12	10	10	10
Service and sales workers	11	4	5	20	17	22	23
Agriculture and fishery workers	2	5	0	7	6	5	5
Trades workers	7	9	14	30	25	20	21
Plant and machine operators and assemblers	4	0	3	7	6	7	7
Elementary occupations	3	0	2	5	4	7	7
Total	45	33	40	118	100	96	100

3.7 ACTIVITIES IN THE 12 MONTHS PRIOR TO ARRIVAL

Recently arrived refugees were asked about the activities they were engaged in during the 12 months prior to coming to New Zealand. As is shown in Table 3.19, 42 percent were working in this period. Again, Convention refugees were the most likely to have been in work.

A number of participants were at home with children (22 percent) or studying (20 percent). More Quota refugees than Convention or Family Reunion refugees were engaged in these activities. Forty-two percent of Quota refugees said they were looking after themselves or their families in a refugee camp in the period prior to coming to New Zealand. Twelve percent of participants said they were at home without children.

Table 3.19 Activities recently arrived refugees spent time doing in the 12 months prior to coming to New Zealand

Activities	Refugee type							
	Quota		Convention		Family Reunion		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Working for pay or profit	27	30	29	73	22	38	78	42
At home with children	28	31	5	13	9	16	42	22
Looking after myself/family in refugee camp	37	42	0	0	1	2	38	20
Studying	22	25	5	13	10	17	37	20
At home without children	7	8	4	10	11	19	22	12
Working without pay	2	2	3	8	1	2	6	3
Looking for work	1	1	2	5	3	5	6	3
Farming, fishing, craftwork	2	2	0	0	0	0	2	1
Other	6	7	1	3	5	9	12	6
Total	89	100	40	100	58	100	187	100

Note

1. One did not know and one did not respond.
2. Does not include those 14 years or younger.

3.8 SUMMARY

This chapter has highlighted the diverse backgrounds of the research participants. That more than two thirds of *recently arrived* Quota refugees had spent time in refugee camps is significant and is likely to be a factor in this group typically having less pre-arrival education and work experience than the other groups. Experiences in the camps are likely to impact on resettlement in a number of ways. *Established* refugees (who were all Quota refugees) had a similar level of pre-arrival education and work experience to *recently arrived* Quota refugees.

Many participants brought impressive language skills with them to New Zealand, with many able to communicate well in three or more languages. While all participants could speak at least one language, a number of *recently arrived* and *established* Quota refugees were not able to read or write well in any language. Nearly all Convention refugees could speak, read and write in at least one language.

Convention refugees were different from Quota and Family Reunion refugees in many areas. They had more pre-arrival education (and subsequently a higher level of qualification) and a higher proportion had worked before coming to New Zealand. They were also more likely to have been working in the 12 months prior to coming to New Zealand. There could be a number of reasons for the differing characteristics of Convention refugees in comparison with other participants. Asylum seekers are often motivated to seek a better life, have the financial means to afford to get to a country of asylum, and none had spent time in a refugee camp.

There were differences by gender. Overall, females had less pre-arrival education and qualifications than males with most of this difference being accounted for by Quota refugees (a finding consistent for both the *recently arrived* and *established* Quota refugees). Males were more likely than females to have worked before coming to New Zealand.

4 PRIOR INFORMATION ABOUT NEW ZEALAND

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the information and expectations that participants had about New Zealand prior to arrival. *Recently arrived* refugees described what they knew about New Zealand before arrival and where they got their information. The Convention refugees described the situation that led them to choose to come to New Zealand rather than another country. Both the *recently arrived* and *established* refugee groups describe their expectations about New Zealand before arrival and how these compared with their actual experiences once in New Zealand.

The topics covered in this chapter include:

- what participants knew about New Zealand;
- those who spent time in refugee camps;
- Convention refugees coming to New Zealand;
- where refugees got information about New Zealand;
- expectations about New Zealand; and
- whether the expectations were met.

Key themes

- ➔ *Recently arrived* refugees did not have much knowledge about New Zealand prior to arrival. Fifty-nine percent had little or no information.
- ➔ Convention refugees knew the least about New Zealand before arrival. A number commented they had no choice about coming here and others said an intermediary arranged for them to come here. Family Reunion refugees knew the most, having often been told about New Zealand by family members. Although, even they were not well informed.
- ➔ The most common expectations that participants had before arrival was that they would be able to find work in New Zealand and that they would be safe and secure. However, many had expressed no expectations about life in New Zealand before arriving.
- ➔ Many participants said that they found it more difficult to get work than they had expected. Many commented that their expectations of coming to a safe and peaceful country were met.

Six in ten refugees knew little to nothing about New Zealand prior to arrival.

The most common expectation refugees had was that they would be able to find work in New Zealand.

4.2 WHAT PARTICIPANTS KNEW ABOUT NEW ZEALAND

Information and knowledge about a country prior to arrival is important as it builds a sense of belonging, community and familiarity that can contribute to resettlement.

Recently arrived refugees were asked at six months how much they knew about New Zealand before arrival. As is shown in Table 4.1, 59 percent of these refugees knew little to nothing about the country. Twenty-two percent had some

information and only 6 percent felt they were well informed. Thirteen percent answered this question with ‘don’t know’.

Those who knew the most were Family Reunion refugees (24 percent had some information and a further 14 percent had a fair amount of information). This is not surprising given they already had family in New Zealand, although a high proportion still did not know much about the country. One quarter of Quota refugees had at least some information about New Zealand while only 17 percent of Convention refugees did so.

Table 4.1 How much *recently arrived* refugees knew about New Zealand before they arrived

How much refugees knew about New Zealand	Refugee type							
	Quota		Convention		Family Reunion		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
A fair amount	2	2	1	2	10	14	13	6
Some information	22	23	6	15	17	24	45	22
Not much	31	33	13	32	26	37	70	34
Nothing at all	34	36	12	29	6	8	52	25
Don't know	6	6	9	22	12	17	27	13
Total	95	100	41	100	71	100	207	100

Note

1. Two did not respond. Those who did not know are included in the table.

“I had heard that New Zealand was a very nice, beautiful country and the people are very nice. I just wanted to come here as soon as I could.”

Iraqi Family Reunion refugee, six months

When asked for more detail about what information they had about New Zealand, most *recently arrived* refugees gave fairly general responses. Apart from those who said they did not know or knew nothing, most had cursory information about the physical environment, including such things as the weather (32 responses) and the beauty of the country (18 responses). A few people commented on New Zealand being safe and peaceful (17 responses) and a few others on the rights of individuals in the country.

Very few knew much about New Zealand’s economic or social system. For example, 12 people said they knew about the political system and eight people said they knew about the social welfare system. Eight individuals said they knew something about the economic situation in general while another eight commented that New Zealand was a developed country.

Most of the refugees spoken to had little information about New Zealand prior to arriving here. This finding has implications for their resettlement. The more someone knows about the country they are coming to and what to expect upon arrival, the easier it will be to resettle once here and, more particularly, to develop expectations that match the realities of resettling and finding work.

4.3 THOSE WHO SPENT TIME IN REFUGEE CAMPS

Those who spent time in a refugee camp (69 individuals) were asked how they were selected to come to New Zealand. Most of these people were Quota refugees who had come to join their families or had been mandated by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and referred to come to

New Zealand. Only six of these people specified they had heard good things about New Zealand and decided they would like to come here. A number commented that New Zealand was their second or third choice.

“They declined my application to let me go to the US and Canada. On the third time, they told me that I could go to New Zealand.”

Iraqi Quota refugee, six months

4.4 CONVENTION REFUGEES COMING TO NEW ZEALAND

Since few Convention refugees knew much about New Zealand before arriving here, they were asked why they had they come to New Zealand rather than another country. One quarter said they had heard New Zealand was a safe and peaceful place while a few had family here. A number of Convention refugees said they had the opportunity to come to New Zealand or that New Zealand was the only option, while some commented their ‘agent’ had suggested they come here.

These responses are similar to a recent study in the United Kingdom (UK) (Robinson and Segrott, 2002, p.vii-viii) which notes that decisions to claim asylum were based on the following criteria:

- the principle aim was reaching a safe place;
- choice was based on having family or friends in the country, the belief that the UK was a safe, tolerant and democratic country, previous links between the UK and their own country and their ability to speak English or desire to learn it;
- agents played a key role in channelling the asylum seekers to particular countries; and
- there was little evidence that participants had detailed knowledge of UK immigration or asylum procedures, entitlements to benefits, or the availability of work.

Given that few of the Convention refugees knew much about New Zealand prior to arriving here, it would seem likely that similar criteria apply here (few knew much about the detailed asylum procedures or benefit entitlement in New Zealand either).

4.5 WHERE REFUGEES GOT INFORMATION ABOUT NEW ZEALAND

The research participants who had gained information about New Zealand got it from a range of formal and informal channels (see Table 4.2). As expected, there were differences between the refugee groups in how they obtained information. Quota refugees appeared to have relied the most on institutional structures such as the UNHCR and the New Zealand Immigration Service (NZIS) as well as media and books, and to a lesser extent on relatives and friends. By contrast, Family Reunion refugees tended to rely heavily on family and relatives for information about New Zealand. Just under one half of Convention refugees said

“New Zealand respects human rights. I will have a peaceful life. Until I reach here I was not sure that I am coming here. Agent arranged here.”

Sri Lankan Convention refugee, six months

“New Zealand was the only option, however, saving my life was more important than choosing where to go.”

Iranian Convention refugee, six months

they had no information prior to coming to New Zealand while another half said they got information from a range of sources (including 21 percent who received information from the media and/or books).

“Community expectations build unrealistic hopes in new arrivals...”

Service provider, focus group

Refugees often rely on social networks because they consider them to be more accurate than official information (Koser and Pinkerton, 2002). However, a point raised by refugee service providers who took part in focus groups was that for refugee families and communities already in New Zealand, their need for family reunification might well mean that, in order to encourage a person to New Zealand, inaccurate information is provided. In this instance, refugees would exaggerate to family members overseas the positive aspects about New Zealand and their personal successes (such as finding work) so relatives do not feel that their struggle to come to New Zealand will be in vain.

Table 4.2 Where *recently arrived* refugees got information about New Zealand before arrival

Information source	Refugee type							
	Quota		Convention		Family Reunion		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Relatives	17	18	5	13	51	76	73	37
UNHCR	28	30	0	0	0	0	28	14
Friends	36	16	2	11	1	10	39	13
Media/books	8	9	8	21	8	12	24	12
NZIS	16	17	0	0	2	3	18	9
Refugee camp	6	6	0	0	0	0	6	3
Other	5	5	5	13	2	3	12	6
Did not get any information	17	18	17	45	4	6	38	19
Don't know	10	11	1	3	4	6	15	8
Total participants	94		38		67		199	

Note

1. Participants could give multiple responses so columns do not add to 100 percent.
2. Ten did not respond. Those who did not know are included in the table.

4.6 EXPECTATIONS ABOUT NEW ZEALAND

Expectations about life in New Zealand can impact on resettlement experiences, especially if those expectations are not met. Some refugee service providers who took part in focus groups felt that refugees often came to New Zealand with high or unrealistic expectations, such as, that they will have a house on arrival or have minimal difficulty finding a job. However, it is important to note that such expectations are not necessarily ‘unrealistic’. The expectations that *recently arrived* and *established* refugees had about life in New Zealand before arrival are explored below.

4.6.1 *Recently arrived* refugees

The most common expectations *recently arrived* refugees expressed were that:

- they would be able to find work (48 responses); and
- they would be safe and secure and have a peaceful life (42 responses).

“That it would be easy to find work, good education, good health service and that it would be safe.”

Somali Quota refugee, six months

Other expectations were that:

- they would have a better and easier life (30 responses);
- they would be accepted by New Zealanders (29 responses); and
- they would have access to education (27 responses).

Having said this, 36 participants said they had no expectations or did not know what to expect, perhaps because they did not have access to adequate information. Only one person said they expected it would be difficult to find work in New Zealand while three expected to have language difficulties.

Quota and Family Reunion refugees had similar expectations while Convention refugees differed. Convention refugees mainly expected they would be secure and safe in New Zealand and that they would find work. Apart from these, they had few others. Quota and Family Reunion refugees also expected they would be able to access study and find work in New Zealand, that they would have an easier life, and that New Zealanders would be nice to them.

4.6.2 *Established* refugees

As with *recently arrived* refugees, the most common expectations that *established* refugees had were that:

- they would be able to find work in New Zealand (66 responses);
- New Zealand would be a safe and peaceful place (59 responses); and
- they were coming to a place where people would be friendly and helpful (52 responses).

Other expectations related to:

- New Zealand having a Western style culture (31 responses);
- life being better or easier (30 responses);
- the physical environment, such as the beauty of the country or the weather (28 responses);
- having freedom and democracy (21 responses);
- opportunities to study (17 responses); and
- a better future for their children (11 responses).

Twenty *established* refugees commented they had few or no expectations about New Zealand, often because they came at such short notice and had no idea about the place they were coming to.

4.7 WHETHER EXPECTATIONS WERE MET

In order to ascertain whether participants' expectations about New Zealand were met, they were asked in what ways New Zealand was similar to and different from what they had expected. These findings are discussed below.

4.7.1 *Recently arrived* refugees

When asked if they found New Zealand similar to what they had expected, some *recently arrived* refugees responded that it was as they had expected, while

"I believed it was multicultural and as my relatives said, New Zealand people are friendly and kindly, and the Halal food is available."

Somali Quota refugee, five years

"I expected to find a job quickly, which didn't happen."

Iranian Convention refugee, six months

others said only certain aspects of life were. A number said they did not know. When asked in what ways New Zealand differed from their expectations, a number of participants said they did not know or chose not to respond.

Some participants pointed out the areas where New Zealand was similar or different to their expectations. These are listed below in Table 4.3. Sixty-two people commented that it was harder to find work. This would seem to be the major area where there was a disparity between expectation and reality.

Forty-seven people commented that New Zealand had met their expectations in terms of being peaceful and safe. Somali women who took part in a focus group also commented that New Zealand had met their expectations in terms of being safe.

“To some extent I found that New Zealand is similar to what I expected. The only problem that I have is being far and separate from my family.”

Afghan Convention refugee, six months

Table 4.3 Main areas *recently arrived* refugees’ expectations about New Zealand were met or not met

Expectations met (responses)	Expectations not met (responses)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A secure, safe and peaceful life (47) ▪ New Zealanders friendly and kind (30) ▪ Able to study (29) ▪ New Zealand a beautiful country (20) ▪ A better life in New Zealand (17) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Difficult to find work or start a business (62) ▪ Difficult to get family to New Zealand (11) ▪ Not enough money (11) ▪ Weather (9)

Note

1. Participants could give multiple responses.

4.7.2 *Established* refugees

The *established* refugees had been in New Zealand for around five years, so it is understandable that 26 people responded that they did not know what was similar and 39 people did not know what differed from their initial expectations. A number of individuals did not have expectations so could not comment on what was similar or different.

Twenty-one people said New Zealand was similar to what they expected while 23 said New Zealand was better than what they had expected. Ten individuals said it was not at all similar.

“Was more than we expected. New Zealanders are nice, helpful and friendly people. The benefit from WINZ [W&I], hospital services, schooling for the kids, and more.”

Iraqi Quota refugee, five years

“I have no expectation about this country because I came from refugee camp life, where you can’t get the information you want to have.”

Ethiopian Quota refugee, five years

“My husband can’t find a job. I wish we were not supported with the unemployment benefit, but it’s too difficult to find work in New Zealand.”

Vietnamese Quota refugee, five years

Some participants described areas that were similar to or different from their expectations and these results are in Table 4.4. As with *recently arrived* refugees, many *established* refugees had expected that they would be able to find work in New Zealand and, even after five years, this was the main area that differed from their initial expectations (64 responses). A number commented about their lack of income and only having enough money to survive. However, there were two individuals who mentioned that, as they had expected, it was easy to get work.

Also in line with *recently arrived* refugees, many felt their expectation about coming to a peaceful place had been met. Sixty individuals commented on a peaceful and safe country, 19 said they had freedom and eight said they had democracy and human rights.

“Freedom to move around. In day to day living you don't come in contact with security forces. There's law and order in society.”

Sri Lankan Quota refugee, five years

A few individuals felt there was too much freedom in New Zealand and did not view this positively. For example, one man said that he did not like that children in New Zealand were free to form relationships without their parents' knowledge. Burmese men who took part in a focus group felt similarly. They had expected New Zealand to be a “strict country with good rules and discipline” but found this was not the case. The Burmese men felt that the amount of freedom that people had in New Zealand meant there was a lack of discipline. They gave an example of police officers observing but not taking action to stop vandalism.

Some felt that freedom in New Zealand could be a two-edged sword with a lack of discipline being the down side.

Many of those who expected a better future for their children felt this had eventuated. This included their children going to school and being happy in New Zealand. A small number of *established* refugees mentioned difficulties with having few rights, feelings of social isolation and experiences of being discriminated against by New Zealanders.

Table 4.4 Main areas *established* refugees' expectations about New Zealand were met or not met

Expectations met (responses)	Expectations not met (responses)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A peaceful, safe, and good country (60) ▪ New Zealanders kind and friendly (33) ▪ New Zealand culture and food (27) ▪ Freedom (19) ▪ Weather (18) ▪ Good future for children (15) ▪ Democracy and human rights (8) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Difficult to get a job (64) ▪ Not enough money (25) ▪ Difficult to get to know New Zealanders (7) ▪ Difficult to reunite with family (6)

Note

1. Participants could give multiple responses.

4.8 SUMMARY

Many refugees knew little about New Zealand prior to arrival. Because Family Reunion refugees had family already in New Zealand they were the most informed, although even they could not be said to be well informed. Convention refugees knew the least (often because an intermediary had arranged for them to come here). In general, research participants' expectations about coming to New Zealand were mixed. Some expected that they would be able to find work and this was an area where on the whole expectations were not met. Individuals expected that New Zealand would be a safe and peaceful country with friendly people. Almost uniformly this expectation was met.

“I expected to have a very comfortable life ourselves and be able to help relatives abroad by my father finding a good job. Unfortunately it has not happened so far.”

Afghan Family Reunion refugee, six months

“In fact, I discovered that New Zealand is really a nice and wonderful country having awesome scenes. Besides, New Zealanders seem to be friendly as well as kind and helpful. They have some different cultural issues but they are free to have any belief they want. New Zealand seems to be secure. Everybody is enjoying personal freedom. One feels he is safe and happy.”

Iraqi Quota refugee, five years

Expectations about life in New Zealand can have an important impact on the resettlement experiences of refugees. Access to accurate information about New Zealand before arrival can make it easier to resettle once here and to manage expectations about the realities of settling and finding work.

The freedom that is attractive for some can be seen as leading to a lack of discipline, particularly for people from cultures where respect and discipline are important values.

5 ARRIVAL EXPERIENCES

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter looks at the research participants' initial arrival experiences in New Zealand. This includes time spent at the Mangere Refugee Reception Centre (Mangere) for Quota refugees, the process of claiming asylum for Convention refugees and the residence application process for Family Reunion refugees. The topics covered in this chapter include:

- when refugees first arrive;
- reception and orientation for Quota Refugees;
- what Quota refugees said about Mangere;
- Convention refugees first arrival experiences; and
- Family Reunion refugees coming to New Zealand.

Key themes

- ➔ Most Quota refugees thought the six weeks at Mangere had prepared them well for living in New Zealand. The only improvement Quota refugees would make would be to improve the food at Mangere and make it more appropriate for different ethnic groups. A few suggested that refugees staying at Mangere be involved in food preparation.
 - ➔ About half of the Convention refugees spoken to said the determination process was long-winded. This was difficult as it created uncertainty for the asylum seeker.
 - ➔ All of the Convention refugees had medical screening, half within six months of arriving in New Zealand.
 - ➔ Family Reunion refugees had mixed views about their experiences of lodging an application for residence in New Zealand. A number commented that the process was understandable while others indicated that their family did it for them. A number commented on the expense involved and the difficulty of obtaining documents.
-

5.2 WHEN REFUGEES FIRST ARRIVE

In terms of meeting the initial needs of refugees resettling in New Zealand, government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) work in partnership. Aside from medical, social services and having the initial spell at Mangere for Quota refugees, this includes the government purchasing settlement outcomes from community-based organisations. The NGO sector also works in close partnership with volunteers to provide support and settlement assistance to refugees. As noted previously, much of this support is provided specifically to Quota refugees.

5.3 RECEPTION AND ORIENTATION FOR QUOTA REFUGEES

Quota refugees spend six weeks at the Mangere, which is in Auckland, when they first arrive. The Mangere centre is managed by the Department of Labour's Immigration Service (DoL). Newly arrived refugees have a six-week orientation

programme in their own language. The programme provides general information about life in New Zealand, including relevant institutions and services. It also aims to build basic social and coping skills required for their new life. The Auckland University of Technology (AUT) coordinates the English language and socio-cultural components of the orientation programme. They also provide childcare, special education support and primary and secondary classes, which help prepare students for participation in the New Zealand education system.

While at Mangere, refugees undergo comprehensive medical and dental check-ups and, where required, psychological assessments. The Refugees as Survivors Centre (RAS) provides a trauma counseling service as well as therapeutic activities for adults and children. The Refugee and Migrant Service (RMS) provides social services and coordinates the training of volunteer support workers to assist refugees with ongoing settlement needs and with accessing mainstream services. The DoL's Immigration Service contracts with the RMS to provide support for six months after the refugees leave Mangere.

“Multi-agency support for people when they arrive, early intervention is very helpful. One of the best features of the way we do things.”

Service provider, focus group

In a service provider focus group it was noted that Quota refugees were provided with good support at Mangere. Service providers felt that having people in a concentrated place made it easier to provide core services and it was difficult to give the same level of support once refugees were in the community. Some expressed concern that six weeks was not long enough to educate people about life in New Zealand and felt refugees were not prepared to move into the community after this time. They also expressed concern about the lack of support for Quota refugees after six months, when the RMS support ends.

“Have they been well prepared to move out into the community in six weeks? They’re as prepared as they can be in six weeks! Nothing is familiar to them.”

Service provider, focus group

An early intervention programme has been developed at Mangere to assist with the identification of refugees who are in need of special assistance upon arrival. This programme links together key agencies to identify and assist at-risk individuals (i.e. severely traumatised refugees). The programme aims to address the particular post-arrival settlement needs of individual refugees. These are brought to the attention of relevant government and non-government agencies in a manner that allows for informed decisions with regard to service delivery.

5.4 WHAT QUOTA REFUGEES SAID ABOUT MANGERE

Eighty-seven percent of the 95 *recently arrived* Quota refugees interviewed said their time at Mangere had prepared them well for living in New Zealand.¹⁸ A smaller proportion (13 percent) thought that they were not as prepared as they would have wished. When asked what things were most useful, the majority of research participants said they felt that most things at Mangere were useful. Others commented that the English language classes followed by the health check-up and the general orientation information were most useful.

“Everything was useful, especially the studying English and having the health checks.”

Iranian Quota refugee, six months

¹⁸ One person responded that they did not know.

Many found it difficult to state what the least useful thing about Mangere was, as they felt that everything was good. Having only been in New Zealand for a short period of time, participants may have no benchmarks to comment on what was least useful.

“I believe we were so lucky (maybe) that we didn’t notice anything to be least useful. Almost every aspect of life there seemed to be awesome.”

Iraqi Quota refugee, six months

However, a substantial number commented that the food was not good. About half felt that the food served at Mangere needed to be improved. The main issue related to the food being very different to what they were used to and a number suggested that food from their own ethnic group be served. A few suggested that refugees staying at Mangere be involved in preparing the food.

“I couldn’t eat the food because it was very different to our country’s food.”

Iranian Quota refugee, six months

In other areas, there were very few specific recommendations. A few felt that the facilities and the sleeping quarters could be improved and that the time spent at Mangere could be longer.

5.5 CONVENTION REFUGEES’ FIRST ARRIVAL EXPERIENCES

Convention refugees apply for refugee status either when they arrive in New Zealand or before the temporary visa they are on runs out. If they claim asylum on arrival they may find initial accommodation at a hostel run by the Auckland Refugee Council. If their identity is uncertain, they may be detained at Mangere, or in rare cases in prison. To be determined as a refugee, they have to have an interview with the Refugee Status Branch (RSB) of the DoL’s Immigration Service. The RSB officer decides, based on the interview and research, whether the claimant meets the definition of a refugee contained in the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees. If unsuccessful, the claimant can appeal to the Refugee Status Appeals Authority. If this appeal is not successful, the claimant must then leave New Zealand.¹⁹

A speedy decision-making process is an important part of meeting asylum seekers’ needs (NZIS Literature Review, Gray and Elliott, 2001). Convention refugees were asked how they were treated when they claimed asylum, including the determination process. About half of the 42 Convention refugees who were asked about the determination process said the process was drawn out while six felt it had taken a reasonable amount of time.²⁰ Other comments were generally positive about the process. Sixteen Convention refugees said they were treated well while only one said they were not treated well. Seventeen said their rights

“It would be better if the interview didn’t take more than six months. Refugees have a lot of problems - would be a good thing for refugees if it took less time. One thing I think, when taking two or three years, still suffering and still worrying, don’t know what is going on, no appetite.”

**Ethiopian
Convention
refugee, six
months**

¹⁹ A further and final step would be for the claimant to take their case to the High Court. If they lost this case, they would be removed from the country.

²⁰ The initial determination time has been greatly shortened from a three-year, 3000 case backlog in 1999 to the current three month determination.

were explained to them while two said they were not. Fifteen said that they were helped to find a place to stay when they first arrived at the border and claimed asylum. Only one person indicated they had received no help. Nineteen individuals got a work permit, so they could legally work and support themselves while waiting for a determination of their claim, while three said they did not. It should be noted that those interviewed had successfully received their refugee status and therefore may be more likely to reflect positively on the experience.

Convention refugees were asked what improvements to the process they would suggest. In accordance with the literature, the improvement most commented on was the speed of the determination process, particularly because of the uncertainty created for the asylum seeker. Note that the initial determination time has been greatly shortened since 2000/01 for new asylum seekers.

Service providers felt that, compared to Quota refugees, Convention refugees lacked support in New Zealand. They specifically felt that having the detention centre at Mangere did not assist with resettlement. For example, there was often resentment and tension between Quota refugees and asylum seekers created by housing them in the same place but providing different services. A recent budget initiative (Budget, 2004) will enable more people to be housed (at a slightly lower security level) in the community.

5.5.1 Convention refugees' access to healthcare

Convention refugees are offered free health screening at Greenlane Hospital and the Refugee Health Centre. They cannot be compelled to take up health screening, but are strongly encouraged to do so. A recent article in the New Zealand Medical Journal (Vol. 115, No. 1160, 2002) reported that a group of asylum seekers were suffering a range of medical conditions including, infectious illnesses such as tuberculosis and psychological symptoms that required referral to a counselling service.²¹ This highlights the importance of encouraging these individuals to utilise the medical screening programme.

All the Convention refugees spoken to indicated they had been medically screened. When asked how long they had been in New Zealand before they had their medical screening, half had a screening within six months of being in New Zealand. Three quarters had their screening within one year and the remaining nine took over one year. For two refugees, it was over two years before they were screened (see Table 5.1).

“Huge difficulties for Asylum seekers at Mangere. No resources, and perceived differences re-enforce the gap. Not even given second-hand clothing, or nappies or toiletries.”

Service provider, focus group

²¹ The research in the article was based on the files of 900 screened asylum seekers during the calendar years of 1999 and 2000. These individuals had not had their status determined at that stage and so are different to the group included in this research.

Table 5.1 How long Convention refugees had been in New Zealand before getting health screening

Length of time before getting health screening	Total n
1 month and under	10
2 to 6 months	13
6 months to 1 year	9
Over 1 year	7
Over 2 years	2
Total number	41

Note

1. One did not know.

The Convention refugees were asked if they had access to healthcare in the two years before they came to New Zealand (such as nurses, doctors and hospitals). Of the 38 Convention refugees who responded to this question, 28 said they had access to health services before coming here, while ten said they did not.²²

5.6 FAMILY REUNION REFUGEES COMING TO NEW ZEALAND

The Family Reunion refugees came to New Zealand through the Family Sponsored Stream and came from refugee-like circumstances. They go through a similar application process to other migrants and must meet the health and character checks that are applied to all residence applicants, unless waived.

Family Reunion refugees were asked about their experience of the New Zealand Immigration Service (NZIS) when lodging their application for residence. Their responses varied with a number commenting that the application process was understandable while others commented that they did not have an understanding about what was happening. Many said that their family did it for them or they did not know about the process.

“I can't say. All I know is that my daughter and my son in law did everything possible to bring us here.”

Iraqi Family Reunion refugee, six months

“Our application took more than a year until we got the approval. We didn't have any idea on what was happening with our application.”

Iraqi Family Reunion refugee, six months

Quite a few said the application process took a long time. There were also a number who commented that the application process was expensive. As with Convention refugees, many Family Reunion refugees felt that faster application processing would be an improvement.

“It would be better to make quicker decisions on applications: it's not knowing is the worst thing.”

Iranian Family Reunion refugee, six months

“Only three doctors are employed to do the medical reports in Sri Lanka, so we don't have much choice and there are logistical problems, with long distances of internal travel involved.”

Sri Lankan Family Reunion refugee, six months

The NZIS Literature Review (Gray and Elliott, 2001) found that refugees often faced insurmountable problems in obtaining documentation for relatives living in war-torn or refugee source countries. It is not always possible to obtain medical

²² Four Convention refugees did not respond.

reports on physical health, let alone psychiatric reports (if applying through the now closed Humanitarian Category). Some Family Reunion refugees commented that obtaining these documents was difficult and that this should be considered by the NZIS in processing applications.

On arrival, these refugees are reunited with family, or in some instances are left to cope in New Zealand as best they can. There is no specific service provision for these people because there is currently no way of identifying them, other than through informal channels.²³

5.7 SUMMARY

Quota, Convention and Family Reunion refugees are treated differently on arrival in New Zealand in terms of the services they can access and the help they receive. Quota refugees received the most assistance and the majority of these individuals felt their time at Mangere prepared them well for life in New Zealand. One issue that many participants raised regarding their time at Mangere was that they did not like the food because it was very different to what they were used to. A concern for Convention and Family Reunion refugees was the length of time it took to determine their refugee claim or process their residence application. This meant they were having to wait without knowing the status of their application.

²³ The RMS has a contract with the DoL's Immigration Service to provide some support services to non-Quota refugees and families of refugees in Hamilton and the greater Wellington region. This includes, on-arrival support, orientation assistance, information and referral to community services (such as health and W&I).

03

SETTLEMENT

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SECTION 03

This section describes participants' experiences with housing, getting help, family reunification as well as their access to healthcare and their health status.

Resettlement is a process, the length of which depends on an individual's attributes and personal characteristics. However, there are a number of necessary steps. The early phases require the refugee to have their basic needs met, such as housing and access to relevant social services and assistance. There are likely to be language and cultural differences and the new settler will take some time to become accustomed to their new environment.

One difficulty in defining resettlement is the open-endedness and variability of the process. Definitions range from "securing a permanent footing in a new country" to "full participation in the economic and social opportunity structure of the society" (Fletcher, 1999, p.8). According to the Canadian Council for Refugees (1998), settlement generally refers to acclimatisation and the early stages of adaptation. This is when newcomers make the basic adjustments to life in a new country, including finding somewhere to live, beginning to learn the language, finding a job and learning to find their way round an unfamiliar society.

When refugees first arrive there are a number of areas in which they will need to access assistance to help with the initial period of acclimatisation. Being new to a country means refugees have to rely on other people and agencies, such as family members, ethnic group members, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and government agencies to access this help. The initial priority upon arrival in New Zealand is access to affordable and good quality housing. Identifying and understanding barriers to refugees' access to housing is important. Housing is a basic human need and the adequacy and availability of housing can potentially have an important impact on their resettlement experiences.

Family reunification is generally a high priority for all refugees. When in a new country of resettlement, refugees often feel a sense of responsibility for those family members still in the former country (or in refugee camps). From the perspective of refugees coming to New Zealand, having family already here can greatly assist the resettlement process. The facilitation of refugee family reunion has the potential to improve resettlement outcomes and reduce adjustment costs for refugees by reducing the emotional and financial strain that results from being apart from family members.

Access to healthcare is an important aspect of the resettlement process. Refugees come to New Zealand with a variety of health needs. Some refugees will not have had access to comprehensive healthcare for some years and many will be suffering physical and/or psychological effects from their refugee experience. When refugees first arrive in New Zealand they are often unfamiliar with many aspects of the New Zealand health system, such as the concept of a family doctor, the formalised appointment system and the system of prescribing medicine.

6 HOUSING

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter explores the experiences of the research participants in finding housing in New Zealand, the types of accommodation they were living in and their satisfaction with the housing. Only one person in each household was required to answer the housing section of the questionnaire.²⁴ Although 135 *recently arrived* refugee families were selected for the research, 148 refugees responded to the housing section at six months, indicating that in a number of instances the research participants were not necessarily living in the same households as the family members with whom they came to New Zealand.

Understanding barriers to refugees' access to adequate housing is important.

One-hundred and ten *recently arrived* refugees responded to the housing section at two years, 35 of whom had moved since being interviewed at six months. Only these 35 people were asked questions about moving house in New Zealand. One-hundred and nineteen of the *established* refugees responded to the housing section of their questionnaire.²⁵ The topics covered in this chapter include:

- key housing issues;
- assistance with housing;
- accessing initial accommodation;
- household size;
- number of people per bedroom;
- type of accommodation;
- amount of rent paid;
- how often participants moved;
- problems finding suitable housing;
- reasons for living in current accommodation; and
- satisfaction with housing.

Key themes

- ➔ Quota refugees received the most help to find their houses at six months and were the most likely to be living in government subsidised Housing New Zealand Corporation (HNZC) houses. However, they were also the least satisfied with their houses. This may relate to them not having much choice about where they lived and the houses often being too small for their families.
- ➔ Research participants, particularly Quota refugees, were living in houses with a substantially higher number of people per bedroom than the New Zealand average, which raises issues of overcrowding and the associated health risks.

²⁴ Where more than one adult in a family was being interviewed, the participant who was mostly responsible for organising housing for the family was asked the questions in the housing section.

²⁵ Because *recently arrived* refugees at two years only answered a limited number of questions in the housing section, the majority of analysis in this section relates to *recently arrived* refugees at six months and *established* refugees.

- More than one third of *recently arrived* and *established* refugees had problems finding suitable housing, with the main difficulty being finding housing that was affordable, followed by communication problems because of their lack of English language proficiency. Some *established* refugees said they had difficulties finding suitable housing because of discrimination.
- The size of houses was very important to research participants, particularly those with large families, and this was the main reason given for satisfaction or dissatisfaction with housing.

6.2 KEY HOUSING ISSUES

Housing close to one's ethnic community can provide both social and emotional support for refugees.

Finding adequate housing is an important first step for refugees resettling in New Zealand. Certain aspects of refugees' housing impact on how they feel about where they live. Three important issues were location, cost, and cultural appropriateness.

An important aspect of positive resettlement for many refugees is being located near their ethnic community. Distance from this community can be an isolating experience for refugees. This is especially true if they do not speak English or do not have access to transport and have to learn to use the public transport system. Being close to one's community can provide both social and emotional support and lessen feelings of isolation, particularly in the early years. However, it is not necessarily important to all refugees and some may, indeed, choose not to be part of their community.

It is also important to be close to services such as shops, schools and places to practise religion. In this study, nearly all participants identified with a religion and participated in a religious activity on a regular basis. Proximity to the church, mosque or temple is important to this group of individuals.

For those who are working, living on a good public transport route or near to their workplace is important. If the workplace is too far away, the cost of transport may outweigh the benefits of being in work, particularly if in low paid work. This is, of course, not peculiar to refugees and is likely to apply to other New Zealanders, particularly those who do not have access to private transport because they do not have a driver's license or are unable to afford a car.

Another key housing issue for refugees is the affordability of their house or flat. Cost is a key factor for these individuals as they are often on some form of government income support. The majority of refugees interviewed were living in rental accommodation, rented from either the Housing New Zealand Corporation (HNZC) or from a private landlord. HNZC houses are generally preferred by refugees because the rent is income related, and therefore cheaper.

It is not appropriate in some cultures to have open-plan living where the kitchen is not closed off from the living area.

It is important that housing meets the particular needs of refugees. They often have families that are larger than those of the average New Zealander and live in households with extended family. This means there can be up to 12 people living in a house (see Section 6.5 below). House size is often the cause of dissatisfaction. The cultural appropriateness of housing is also an issue, for example, open-plan living where the kitchen is not closed off from the living area or a toilet and bathroom in the same room is not appropriate in some cultures.

Refugees may also have other particular needs. A group of Burmese refugees in Nelson mentioned that they preferred stand alone houses rather than joined flats because they were conscious of the smells from their cooking when living in close proximity to others.

6.3 ASSISTANCE WITH HOUSING

Finding a house in New Zealand can be a difficult process. The process of housing Quota refugees begins before they arrive in New Zealand with the Refugee and Migrant Service (RMS) and HNZC sourcing suitable accommodation. These agencies can face considerable difficulty in finding appropriate housing, particularly for single refugees (NZIS Literature Review, Gray and Elliott, 2001). HNZC often sources housing from the private market for Quota refugees, as the agency itself does not have enough housing stock to meet all needs.

Refugees may prefer to live close to established ethnic communities where housing is at a premium. For example, refugees who have been in New Zealand for some time are often established in areas that are now high-density urban regions (such as Mount Roskill in Auckland and Newtown in Wellington). Because these areas are now highly sought after, there is seldom affordable housing for new arrivals.

Convention refugees are expected to find their own accommodation. When they first arrive in New Zealand they can stay in the emergency accommodation provided by the Auckland Refugee Council, but are encouraged to stay no longer than three months. Family Reunion refugees generally rely on the people who are sponsoring them and may move into houses with family already in New Zealand. Sponsors sign an agreement with the Department of Labour (DoL) undertaking to ensure that adequate accommodation in New Zealand is, and continues to be, available for their relatives and, if necessary, undertake to provide accommodation during the first 24 months of their relatives' residence in New Zealand (although it does not necessarily follow that refugees receive this support). The RMS provides some support to non-Quota refugees and families of refugees, such as assistance with basic household furnishings through donated goods.

6.4 ACCESSING INITIAL ACCOMMODATION

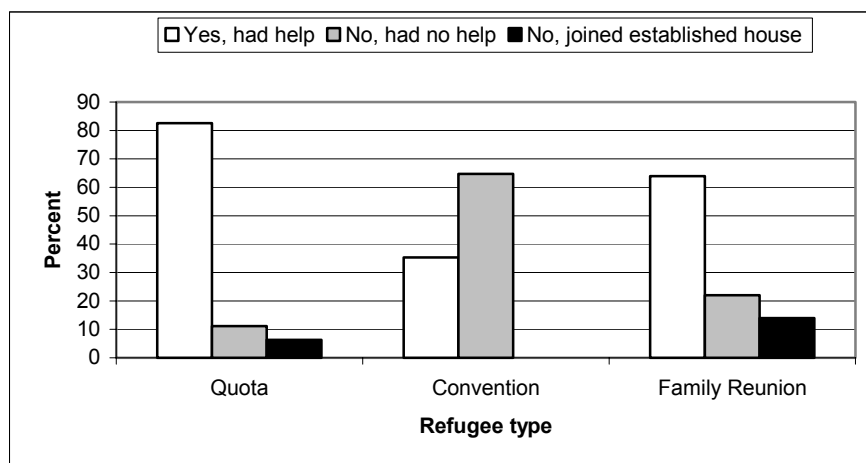
Recently arrived refugees who had been in New Zealand for six months were asked if they (and their families) received help to find their current house. About three quarters of this group had moved at least once since they came to New Zealand, so the help provided was not necessarily for their first house.

Figure 6.1 shows that 83 percent of Quota refugee families were assisted to find the housing they were in at six months. This help came mostly through formal channels including the RMS and HNZC. In contrast, the 64 percent of Family Reunion refugee families who had assistance, were helped by friends, family and sponsors. Only 35 percent of the Convention refugees received any assistance, mostly from friends. Six percent of Quota refugees and 14 percent of Family

Reunion refugees indicated that they had joined an already established household.

The sources of help reflect the differing services and policies in place for the three refugee groups. Quota refugees reported being assisted by more organisations or individuals than people from the other two groups (see Table A.4.3 in Appendix 4). Most research participants who got help said the assistance was very useful to them.

Figure 6.1 Whether recently arrived refugees at six months received help to find their current house $n=147$



Note

1. One did not respond.

Burmese Quota refugees in Nelson discussed in a focus group that they were helped into their houses by Nelson Refugee Assistance (the local equivalent of the RMS). They were impressed that their houses were furnished when they moved in which meant they could spend their re-establishment grant (\$1,200 for each Quota refugee family) on other items such as clothing.

6.5 HOUSEHOLD SIZE

Research participants were living in households that were larger, on average, than the general New Zealand population.²⁶ The average household size for *recently arrived* refugees at six months was 4.2 people and *established* refugees had an average household size of 4.4 people. This compared to an average household size for the New Zealand population at the 2001 Census of 2.7 people.²⁷

Refugees often live in households with more people than the average New Zealand household.

Of the *recently arrived* refugees interviewed at six months, most were living in households with other people. Only 8 percent of households contained one person (see Table 6.1). Fifty-three percent of the *recently arrived* refugee households contained between two and four people. There were some differences in family size by refugee type with 45 percent of Family Reunion

²⁶ Household size included the total number of individuals living in the same house as the participant.

²⁷ Source: Statistics New Zealand (SNZ), 2001 Census of Population and Dwellings. Accessed from the SNZ website (www.stats.govt.nz).

households containing between five and seven people and 13 percent of Quota refugee households containing eight or more individuals.

Just under half of the *established* refugee households contained between two and four people and 43 percent contained five or more people. Ten percent of *established* refugee households contained only one person.

Table 6.1 Number of people in each refugee household

Number of people in household	Refugee type									
	Recently arrived (6 months)								Established	
	Quota		Convention		Family Reunion		Total			
n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	
1	9	14	3	9	0	0	12	8	12	10
2 to 4	28	44	23	68	27	53	78	53	56	47
5 to 7	18	29	8	24	23	45	49	33	34	29
8 or more	8	13	0	0	1	2	9	6	16	14
Total	63	100	34	100	51	100	148	100	118	100

Note

1. One *established* refugee did not respond.

6.6 NUMBER OF PEOPLE PER BEDROOM

As discussed above, research participants were living in larger households than the average New Zealander. Table 6.2, below, shows the average number of people per bedroom in the *recently arrived* and *established* refugee households. Figures from the 2001 Census relating to the New Zealand population are provided for comparison.

Recently arrived refugees interviewed at six months had an average of 1.72 people per bedroom and *established* refugees had an average of 1.67 people per bedroom. Research participants were living in houses with a substantially higher proportion of people per bedroom than the New Zealand average (0.88 people per bedroom). The number of people per bedroom by ethnic group in New Zealand ranged from 0.84 for New Zealand European to 1.33 for Pacific people. These findings raise some issues relating to household crowding. For example, the Wellington School of Medicine and Health Sciences, in accordance with overseas studies, found higher rates of infectious diseases in areas with higher proportions of crowded households (SNZ, 2003).

Refugees were living in houses with a substantially higher number of people per bedroom than the New Zealand average.

Table 6.2 Average number of people per bedroom for refugees, compared with 2001 Census figures

	Refugee type				
	Recently arrived (6 months)				Established
	Quota	Convention	Family Reunion	Total	
Average number per bedroom	1.83	1.49	1.72	1.72	1.67
NZ 2001 Census figures	NZ European	Maori	Pacific	Asian	Total NZ
Average number per bedroom	0.84	1.09	1.33	1.10	0.88

Source: 2001 Census of Population and Dwellings.

6.7 TYPE OF ACCOMMODATION

Over 95 percent of both the *recently arrived* refugees interviewed at six months and *established* refugees were living in private accommodation. Private accommodation included houses, flats or apartment blocks as opposed to public accommodation such as motels, hotels, guest homes or boarding houses. Most participants were living in rented accommodation. Of the 148 *recently arrived* refugees interviewed at six months, 139 said someone in their household was paying rent. Of the 119 *established* refugees who responded to the housing section, 117 were paying rent.

6.7.1 Rental accommodation

Table 6.3 shows that just over half of *recently arrived* refugees interviewed at six months were paying rent to a private landlord. Again, there were differences by refugee type. Nine in ten Convention refugees paid rent to a private landlord as did six in ten Family Reunion refugees but just over one quarter of Quota refugees. Overall, one third paid rent to HNZC, mostly Quota refugees. Family Reunion refugees were the only group to pay rent to a ‘business’ as 22 percent (11 individuals) of this group did. All of the Family Reunion refugees who paid rent to a business were from the Middle East (mostly Iraq). Six percent paid rent to a local authority and most of these individuals were living in Wellington.

Of the *established* refugees, 46 percent were paying rent to a private landlord, 37 percent were renting HNZC houses and 12 percent were renting from a local authority (again, mostly in Wellington). Fewer *established* refugees (who were all Quota refugees) paid rent to HNZC than *recently arrived* Quota refugees interviewed at six months. While HNZC has always prioritised housing applications from Quota refugees, it is only in recent years that a National Refugee Coordinator position has been established. Prior to this, Quota refugees did not receive a high level of support from HNZC. Since *established* refugees had been in New Zealand for around five years they were more likely to have shifted from their original housing and obtained the financial resources to rent independently from HNZC.

Table 6.3 Who rent was paid to

Who rent was paid to	Refugee type									
	Recently arrived (six months)								Established	
	Quota		Convention		Family Reunion		Total		n	%
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Private landlord	16	26	26	90	30	61	72	52	54	46
HNZC	42	69	1	3	3	6	46	33	43	37
Business	0	0	0	0	11	22	11	8	4	3
Local authority or council	3	5	1	3	4	8	8	6	14	12
Other	0	0	1	3	1	2	2	1	2	2
Total	61	100	29	100	49	100	139	100	117	100

Note

1. One *recently arrived* refugee did not know and one did not respond. One *established* refugee did not respond and one said no one in their household was paying rent.
2. Seven said no one in their household paid rent.

6.8 AMOUNT OF RENT PAID

Table 6.4 shows the proportion of refugees paying different levels of rent and the average amount paid by each group. On average, the weekly rent paid by *recently arrived* refugee households at six months was \$163. Generally, Quota refugees paid the least amount, averaging \$105 (reflecting the high proportion of this group living in government subsidised HNZN housing). Family Reunion refugees paid an average of \$203 and Convention refugees paid the most, with an average of \$216. Convention refugees were mostly renting from private landlords which explains the higher rent. There was a broad range in the amount of rent paid with \$32 being the lowest and \$450 the highest.

Quota refugees paid the least rent, averaging \$105 per week. Family Reunion refugees paid an average of \$203 and Convention refugees \$216.

The average amount of rent paid by *established* refugees (\$162 per week) was very similar to the average for the *recently arrived* refugees. The smallest amount of rent paid by this group was \$37 and the highest amount was \$360. The majority of those paying more than \$200 per week were living in Auckland (see Table A.4.5, Appendix 4). Appendix 4 also shows the amount of rent participants paid by household size.

Table 6.4 Amount of weekly rent paid

Amount paid in dollars	Refugee type									
	Recently arrived								Established	
	Quota		Convention		Family Reunion		Total		n	%
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
0 to 50	8	14	0	0	2	4	10	7	6	5
51 to 100	36	61	2	7	7	14	45	33	41	36
101 to 150	4	7	2	7	1	2	7	5	13	11
151 to 200	6	10	7	26	13	27	26	19	12	10
201 to 250	3	5	11	41	13	27	27	20	17	15
251 to 300	0	0	2	7	11	22	13	10	18	16
Over 300	2	3	3	11	2	4	7	5	8	7
Total	59	100	27	100	49	100	135	100	115	100
Average weekly rent \$	105		216		203		163		162	

Note

1. Four *recently arrived* refugees did not know. Two *established* refugees did not respond.

6.8.1 Amount of rent paid by landlord type

Table 6.5 shows the average amount of rent paid to different types of landlords. *Recently arrived* refugees at six months and *established* refugees who were renting from HNZN paid on average the lowest amount of rent (\$69 and \$87 per week respectively). Those who paid the most rent were renting from a business or through the private market. Those who were renting from a local authority were mainly in the Wellington urban region and were also paying comparatively low rents.

Table 6.5 Average amount of weekly rent and who it was paid to

Who rent was paid to	Refugee type			
	Recently arrived		Established	
	Average amount	Total	Average amount	Total
	\$	n	\$	n
Private landlord	224	68	222	54
HNZC	69	45	87	42
Business	215	11	270	4
Local authority or council	105	8	101	13
Other	80	1	280	2
Total		133		115

Note

1. Five *recently arrived* refugees did not know and one did not respond. Two *established* refugees did not respond.

6.9 RECENTLY ARRIVED REFUGEES AT TWO YEARS

The most common reason for moving house was housing being too small.

In their second interview, *recently arrived* refugees were asked if they had moved houses. Those who had moved were asked detailed questions about their housing in New Zealand. Of the 110 *recently arrived* refugees interviewed at two years who answered the housing section, 35 had moved since their last interview.

They had all moved between one and three times. Their main reason for moving was housing being too small, followed by a change in family circumstances such as getting married or having children.

Most of this group were living in private rental accommodation at two years.²⁸ Twenty individuals paid rent to a private landlord and eight paid rent to HNZC. The remainder paid rent to a business, a local authority or council. The average amount of weekly rent paid by this group was \$198, with the smallest amount being \$65 and the highest amount \$375. One person in this group owned a house.

6.10 HOW OFTEN PARTICIPANTS MOVED

Of the *recently arrived* refugees, approximately one quarter were still in their first house at the time of the six month interview. The rest had moved at least once with 5 percent having moved four or more times since arrival.

Table 6.6 shows that Quota refugees had moved the least with about half still in the house they had first moved to after leaving the Mangere Refugee Reception Centre (Mangere). The other half of Quota refugees had moved between one and three times. The majority of Family Reunion refugees had moved at least once. Family Reunion refugees may initially live with family members in New Zealand before finding their own housing, which explains why most of this group had moved at least once. Seventy-nine percent of Convention refugees had moved between one and three times and a further 15 percent had moved between four

²⁸ At two years, two people did not know.

and six times. Convention refugees had been in New Zealand for longer than other groups at six months (while waiting for determination of their refugee status) which partly explains the higher movement patterns by this group. A number of Convention refugees came to New Zealand alone and are likely to be more mobile than those living with family members.

Eleven percent of *established* refugees were still in their first house. Seventy percent had moved between one and three times and 19 percent had moved four or more times.

Table 6.6 Number of times moved since arrival

Number of times moved	Refugee type									
	Recently arrived (six months)								Established	
	Quota		Convention		Family Reunion		Total		n	%
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%		
Had not moved	30	48	2	6	8	16	40	27	13	11
1 to 3 times	32	51	27	79	41	82	100	68	83	70
4 to 6 times	1	2	5	15	1	2	7	5	19	16
7 times or more	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	3
Total	63	100	34	100	50	100	147	100	119	100

Note

1. One *recently arrived* refugee did not respond.

Most often the *established* refugees moved because their house was too small due to marriage, having children or family joining them (32 responses). Other reasons were to obtain a place where the rent was cheaper (14 responses), or because their landlord had sold or reclaimed the house (12 responses). Twelve participants said they moved because they had separated from their partner. A small number had moved to be close to their place of work. Three people commented they had to move because of discrimination (including two who had experienced discrimination from their neighbours).

“The first one was sold and the buyer said I want to use it. The second house was close to skin-head people who showed us hatredness and colour discrimination.”

Somali Quota refugee, five years

6.10.1 Refugee movement between cities

Established refugees were asked if they were still living in the same city they went to when they first came to New Zealand (excluding Mangere). Twenty-four participants (13 percent) had moved cities. Of those, nine were originally living in Auckland, eight originally in Wellington, four in Nelson and three in Hamilton.

The main reasons participants gave for moving cities was for more job opportunities (5 responses), to be closer to community members (5 responses) or to be with friends and family (3 responses). Two participants said they moved from Nelson because they found it too cold, while others said their parents had decided they should move.

“Hamilton is a very small city, with no job opportunities for my children.”

Iraqi Quota refugee, five years

6.11 PROBLEMS FINDING SUITABLE HOUSING

The literature on refugee resettlement notes that refugees, and NGOs that assist with finding housing (such as the RMS), have considerable difficulties with finding housing (NGO Sector, 2000; The European Commission on Refugee and Exiles (ECRE) Taskforce on Integration: Housing, 1999).

6.11.1 *Recently arrived* refugees interviewed at six months and established refugees

“It was hard to find a suitable house big enough for nine people. Houses were very old and the rent was very high.”

Kurdish Quota refugee, six months

Of the *recently arrived* refugees interviewed at six months, 36 percent said they had problems finding suitable housing and 64 percent had none (see Table 6.7). Those who said they had the most problems were Quota and Family Reunion refugees. This finding is interesting given the extra assistance provided to Quota refugees. The most common problems experienced by the participants at six months were affordability and communication problems due to their lack of English language proficiency. Other problems noted by participants were not being able to access HNZA houses and the houses being too small for their family groups. Quota refugees were particularly likely to say they had experienced problems finding houses large enough for their families.

Of the *established* refugees, 41 percent said they had experienced problems finding suitable housing since coming to New Zealand. The types of problems experienced by this group were similar to those experienced by *recently arrived* refugees. Almost half commented that the cost of housing was high (21 responses). Similarly to the *recently arrived* refugees, the next most common problems were finding housing large enough for their families and difficulties accessing HNZA houses.

Table 6.7 Problems finding suitable housing

Did they have problems	Refugee type									
	<i>Recently arrived</i>								<i>Established</i>	
	Quota		Convention		Family Reunion		Total		n	%
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Yes	22	39	9	26	17	39	48	36	49	41
No	35	61	25	74	27	61	87	64	70	59
Total	57	100	34	100	44	100	135	100	119	100

Note

1. At six months, two did not respond.
2. This question was not asked of the eleven individuals interviewed at six months who joined already established households.

“Because the landlords do not like to rent their houses for the large family and the high cost is also another problem.”

Somali Quota refugee, five years

Of the *established* refugees, five said they had difficulties finding suitable housing due to discrimination. Of these people, four were from the Horn of Africa. Focus groups and feedback from the interviewers provided some context and indicated that refugees would often have more success securing rental accommodation if they went to see the house with a ‘Kiwi’.

Generally, the proportion of refugees experiencing difficulties finding suitable housing was similar in Auckland and outside of Auckland. At six months, 33 percent of *recently arrived* refugees in Auckland experienced problems finding housing compared to 41 percent outside of Auckland. Of the *established*

refugees, 38 percent living in Auckland had experienced problems compared to 46 percent living outside of Auckland.

This contrasts to some extent with points raised in focus groups. Several service providers commented on a shortage of housing for refugees in Auckland and also commented on the increasing cost of private rental accommodation in this area. The research associates felt that many refugees were not happy with their housing in Hamilton. They commented that housing available in Hamilton was not big enough (especially for the often large Somali families) and that some refugees in Hamilton were living in a ‘bad’ area and had problems with their neighbours.

6.11.2 Focus groups with service providers

Service providers who took part in focus groups felt that houses available to refugees were often not appropriate in terms of size, cost and being close to services and ethnic communities. Some providers felt that each intake of Quota refugees used up the HNZC stock and this meant that other refugees missed out. HNZC works to provide access to housing to all New Zealanders who need this assistance, therefore refugees are competing for the same HNZC houses along with other low income groups. As discussed above, some felt there was a particular shortage of housing in Auckland.

Some service providers commented that each intake of Quota refugees used up the HNZC stock and so other refugees missed out.

An issue that providers in Christchurch raised was difficulty locating rental accommodation in smaller towns (such as Ashburton). These providers felt there was often work available in smaller towns that would be suitable for refugee groups, but a lack of accommodation meant this was not possible. These smaller towns are often not set up with large numbers of houses for rent.

6.11.3 Problems experienced at two years

Of the *recently arrived* refugees interviewed at two years, 35 had moved since their first interview. Of the 35 individuals, 13 indicated they had experienced problems finding suitable housing since being interviewed at six months. The main problem was affordability. A smaller number discussed problems finding housing in proximity to school or work. Three individuals said they had not been able to get a HNZC house. There were also a number of singular responses such as issues with the landlord, a lack of social networks in the area and the house being too small.

6.12 REASONS FOR LIVING IN CURRENT ACCOMMODATION

All participants were asked why they lived in their current accommodation. The main reasons *recently arrived* refugees were living in their current accommodation were similar at six months and at two years and included:

- being close to facilities such as schools, shops or places of religious observance; and
- being close to their ethnic communities.

There also seemed to be some feeling of obligation to the person or organisation that assisted them, to stay in the house that was initially found for them. A group of Burmese refugees in Nelson who took part in a focus group also gave this as

Some refugees felt an obligation to stay in the house initially found for them.

“It’s convenient to the shopping. There’s plenty of Asian food around, and it’s close to our community. There’s easy access to the doctor.”

Vietnamese Quota refugee, five years

the main reason for why they lived where they did. Other reasons for living in a certain house included the suitability of the house. For example, affordable rent, the house being in good condition or in a good location. Twelve people at six months and ten people at two years commented that their house was close to their place of work.

When *established* refugees were asked why they lived where they did, many commented on the surrounding environment and location. For these individuals, good qualities included being close to facilities (such as schools, parks and shops), a quiet neighbourhood, being close to their communities and houses being reasonably priced. Other responses included houses being in good condition and a good size.

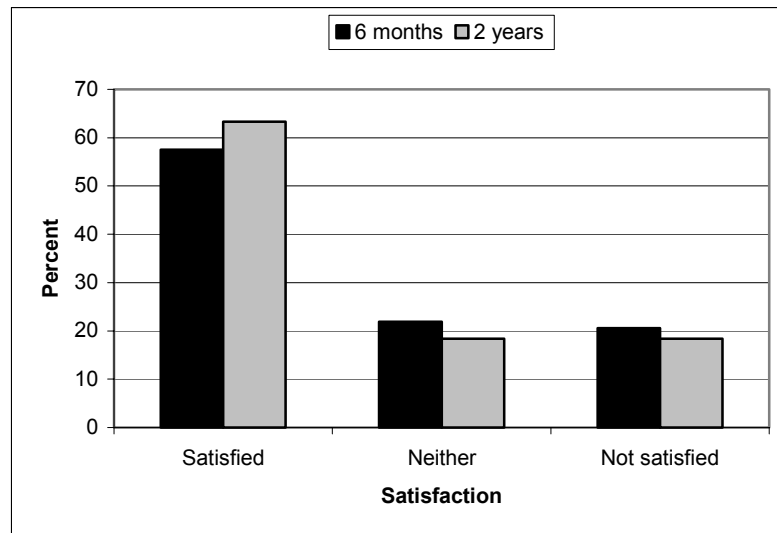
“Because it’s near the children’s school, and also the shopping in the middle of Manurewa on the main road. It’s in a good location and it’s clean and tidy.”

Iraqi Quota refugee, five years

6.13 SATISFACTION WITH HOUSING

Recently arrived refugees were asked how satisfied they were with their current housing at six months and at two years. Overall levels of satisfaction were similar during both periods, with a few more expressing satisfaction after being in New Zealand for two years. At six months, 58 percent were satisfied with their housing, 21 percent were dissatisfied and 22 percent were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. The corresponding figures at two years were 63 percent, 18 percent and 18 percent respectively.

Figure 6.2 Satisfaction with housing for recently arrived refugees $n = 146$ (six months) and 109 (two years)



Note

1. At six months, one did not know and one did not respond. At two years, one did not know.

Convention refugees had the highest rate of satisfaction and the lowest rate of dissatisfaction at both interviews. At two years, 79 percent of Convention

refugees were satisfied with their housing and only 4 percent expressed dissatisfaction. Quota refugees were the most dissatisfied with their housing with just under a third dissatisfied at both interviews. This may relate to Quota refugees having their house found for them rather than having a choice. Also, Quota refugees tend to have larger families than other refugee groups and were often dissatisfied with the size of their houses.

Convention refugees were the most satisfied with their housing, while Quota refugees were the most dissatisfied.

Table 6.8 Satisfaction with housing for recently arrived refugees

Satisfaction with housing	Refugee type							
	Quota		Convention		Family Reunion		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
6 months								
Satisfied	33	52	22	69	29	58	84	58
Neither	12	19	6	19	14	28	32	22
Dissatisfied	19	30	4	13	7	14	30	21
Total	64	100	32	100	50	100	146	100
2 years								
Satisfied	23	52	22	79	24	65	69	63
Neither	8	18	5	18	7	19	20	18
Dissatisfied	13	30	1	4	6	16	20	18
Total	44	100	28	100	37	100	109	100

Note

1. At six months, two did not know. At two years, one did not know.

At six months, the main reasons for satisfaction with housing related to houses being sunny, carpeted, well-ventilated and dry and, perhaps most importantly, houses being a good size. Another important reason for satisfaction was that housing felt safe and secure. A smaller number commented they were satisfied because the rent was affordable.

“This place is more comfortable and warmer than my first house and it has carpet.”

Iranian Quota refugee, six months

The main reason for dissatisfaction was a lack of space although a number also commented on the poor quality of the housing and expensive rent. It is of note that those who indicated they were ‘neither satisfied nor dissatisfied’ often indicated a level of dissatisfaction with their housing when asked to explain further. For example, this group often commented that their houses were too small or that the house had faults. It is possible these participants initially said they were ‘neither satisfied nor dissatisfied’ because they did not want to appear ungrateful.

At two years, the main reason for satisfaction was the size of the house, followed by the condition of the house. A number also commented that they were satisfied because their house was close to facilities, had good outdoor space and the rent was affordable. The main reason for dissatisfaction was, again, housing being too small.

6.13.1 Exploring some issues

Kurdish men living in Christchurch who took part in a focus group identified housing as one of the main issues for them in New Zealand. Many were dissatisfied with their housing and specifically mentioned that their houses were

“When I got here, I was told I would be supplied with a house with a disabled toilet ... but since I got here, it’s all been promising and nothing happening.”

Kurdish man,
focus group

in poor condition, were not large enough for their large families and were not equipped for their needs. The Kurdish men were not happy with the service they had received from HNZC in terms of adapting their houses to meet their needs or finding them a more suitable place to live. One man, confined to a wheelchair, had been waiting for months for the house to be adapted to his needs. A group of Iranian women living in Auckland felt similarly. They were unhappy with the condition and cost of their housing, but they felt that they did not receive the help they wanted from HNZC to find something cheaper. It is important to note that HNZC provides a service to all New Zealand residents and citizens on a low income. HNZC considers factors such as current living arrangements, social, medical and personal requirements and gives priority to those with the greatest need.

Somali women in Auckland and Burmese in Nelson who participated in focus groups were, overall, happy with their houses. Participants in both groups commented that they would like to be living in HNZC houses that were cheaper. The Burmese did not think it was fair that many refugees in Auckland had HNZC houses, while they missed out because of the small stock of HNZC houses in Nelson. The Somali women in Auckland also wanted to live in HNZC houses but were on a waiting list.

6.14 SUMMARY

Despite *recently arrived* Quota refugees being provided with the most assistance to find their housing and often living in subsidised HNZC housing, they were the least satisfied with their housing. There could be a number of reasons for this finding, including Quota refugees having housing found for them rather than having a choice about where they lived. Also, Quota refugees tended to live in households with more people than other research participants and many commented that they had experienced problems finding housing large enough for their families. Convention refugees were the most satisfied with their housing, although this group had the least help with finding housing and were paying the most rent.

This chapter highlights the issue of overcrowding in refugee households. Participants, particularly Quota refugees, were living in households with substantially more people per bedroom than the New Zealand average. Overcrowding has been found to be associated with higher instances of disease.

7 GETTING HELP

7.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter looks at the areas in which the research participants needed help or advice to assist them to settle in New Zealand. Participants were asked whether they received the help they needed, about the help they found the most useful and about difficulties they experienced getting the help they needed. Participants were also asked about assistance they received from their own ethnic groups and the usefulness of this assistance in helping them to settle. The topics covered in this chapter include:

- the context around needing help to settle;
- help and support for *recently arrived* refugees at six months, and then two years;
- help and support for *established* refugees;
- difficulties getting help;
- particularly useful services;
- additional help required;
- help from ethnic groups; and
- service providers' perspectives.

Key themes

- ➔ The four main areas *recently arrived* refugees at six months said they needed help with or information about were government income support, health services, education and training, and local services.
- ➔ Most *recently arrived* refugees received the help they required. Although, only 45 percent received the help they needed to find work.
- ➔ Thirty-six percent of *recently arrived* refugees at two years and 29 percent of *established* refugees said they were not able to get the help they needed at some stage in their resettlement. A number of *recently arrived* refugees said they could not get the help they needed learning English while *established* refugees often referred to family reunification and learning English. Most of the *recently arrived* refugees who could not get help were Quota refugees.
- ➔ A large number of *recently arrived* refugees interviewed at six months and at two years said they still required assistance to settle (65 and 55 percent respectively). The main areas help was required included English language learning, finding work and financial help.
- ➔ Over one third of *established* refugees said they still needed help to settle. The main area this help was needed was with bringing family members to New Zealand. They also still needed help with English language, financial support and finding work.
- ➔ For both the *recently arrived* and *established* groups, participants from South Asia were the least likely and South East Asians were the most likely to feel they still needed assistance to settle. Correspondingly, South Asians were more likely than other participants to be working and rated their English language ability higher than other participants.
- ➔ One half of *recently arrived* refugees at six months said they had received support from their own ethnic group in New Zealand. Sixty-five percent of *established* refugees said they received this support and most said it was

More than half of *recently arrived* refugees felt they still needed help to settle at two years.

very useful. South East Asians were more likely than other participants to receive support from their ethnic group, reflecting the cohesiveness of their community as well as the amount of help required.

7.2 CONTEXT

While there are many commonalities, individual refugees have a number of needs that are unique to their particular circumstances. Depending on factors such as their ability to communicate in English language, level of support from their community and their education and skill level, individuals and families will require different levels of support. An older woman who has never learnt to read or write in her own language will need different types of support than a younger man who has good English language skills.

Quota refugees receive six months of support when they first arrive from the RMS and volunteer support people. The Refugee and Migrant Service (RMS) provides some support to non-Quota refugees and families of refugees, such as referral to essential community services. Other refugees will access less formal support in the form of family, friends and community members.

A group of service providers who took part in focus groups felt many refugees lacked an understanding of services in New Zealand, such as how to make a doctor's appointment, find their way around a hospital, access entitlements from the Ministry of Social Development's Work and Income (W&I), and provide written proof at various agencies (such as the Housing New Zealand Corporation, HNZC). The service providers also felt many refugees lacked an understanding of immigration policy in relation to sponsoring family members to New Zealand.

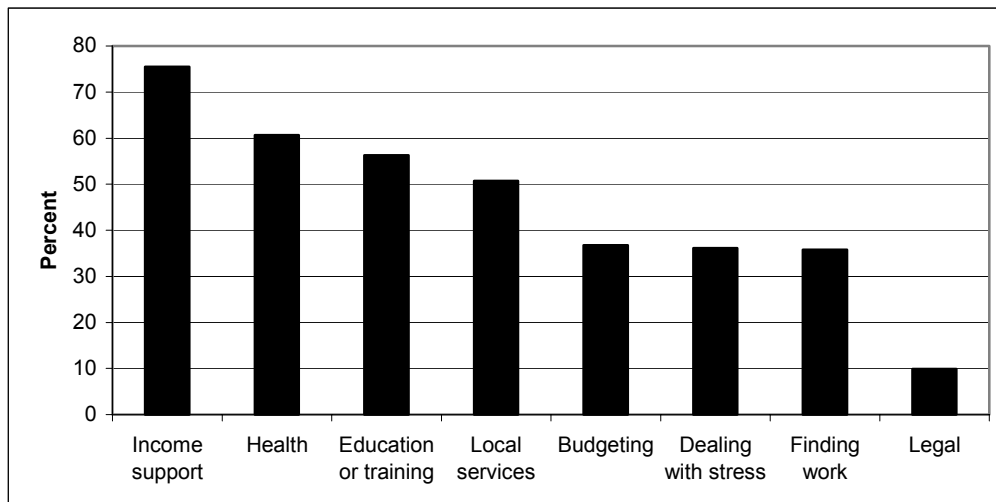
The national Immigration Settlement Strategy (Budget, 2004) includes funding for a national network of resource services. They will provide a clearly identified point of contact for providing information to refugees and migrants (\$11.674 million over four years).

7.3 HELP AND SUPPORT FOR *RECENTLY ARRIVED* REFUGEES AT SIX MONTHS

Three quarters of recently arrived refugees at six months said they needed help with government income support.

Recently arrived refugees at six months were asked about areas they had needed help or advice with since arriving in New Zealand (see Figure 7.1). Three quarters of this group said they needed help with government income support. A number needed help from health services (61 percent), with education and training (56 percent) and with local services, such as, getting the phone connected (51 percent). Thirty-seven percent of participants said they needed help with budgeting and a similar proportion needed help with dealing with stress and finding work. Ten percent said they required legal assistance.

Figure 7.1 Areas recently arrived refugees interviewed at six months needed help or advice n=209



Note

1. Participants indicated all areas they needed help with.
2. Thirteen did not respond to at least one of the questions in this section.

Research participants were asked to describe the types of help they required with finding work and with education and training. Most participants said they required general help for finding work. Others were more specific and said they needed help in areas such as preparing a curriculum vitae, being introduced to employers, obtaining references and learning the processes to follow when applying for jobs. For education and training, most participants required help finding a suitable course (often an English language course). A few participants said they needed help finding child care, financing a course, understanding the New Zealand education system and with transportation to a course.

7.3.1 Whether participants received the help they needed

Table 7.1 shows the areas participants interviewed at six months had needed help since arriving in New Zealand and the number and overall proportion who received the help they needed. Most participants who needed help with health, local services and income support got the help they needed (96 percent, 95 percent and 92 percent respectively). Eighty-five percent of those who needed help with budgeting and 78 percent of those who needed help with education or training received this help. Seventy-three percent said they received the help they needed dealing with the stress associated with moving to and settling into a new country. Thirteen of the 20 participants (65 percent) who needed legal assistance got this help. Only 45 percent received the help they required finding work.

Most recently arrived refugees received the help they needed with healthcare, local services and income support. Only 45 percent received the help they needed finding work.

In some areas, a slightly higher proportion of Family Reunion refugees than Convention or Quota refugees received the help they needed. For example, nearly all Family Reunion refugees who needed help with income support received this help, compared to 27 out of 33 Convention refugees and 58 out of 63 Quota refugees. A similar pattern can be seen for Family Reunion refugees and budgeting. Many Family Reunion refugees said they got help with

budgeting and income support from family members which may explain why this group got more help in these areas.

A higher proportion of Quota refugees received the help they needed with education and training than other research participants, with many Quota refugees saying they received this assistance from the RMS. Family Reunion refugees were less likely than Quota or Convention refugees to get the help they needed with finding work. Around one half of Quota and Convention refugees received the help they needed finding work compared to one third of Family Reunion refugees.

Table 7.1 Areas recently arrived refugees interviewed at six months had needed help and whether they received this help *n=209*

Type of help	Refugee Type								
	Quota		Convention		Family Reunion		Total		
	Need	Got help	Need	Got help	Need	Got help	Need	Got help	Got help
	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	%
Income support	63	58	33	27	58	56	154	141	92
Health	58	56	16	16	51	48	125	120	96
Education or training	70	62	14	9	32	20	116	91	78
Local services	49	49	12	12	42	37	103	98	95
Budgeting	22	17	23	19	30	28	75	64	85
Dealing with stress	24	17	25	18	25	19	74	54	73
Getting work	32	15	21	11	21	7	74	33	45
Legal	7	6	7	6	6	1	20	13	65

Note

1. 'Need' includes those participants who needed help in each area. 'Got help' includes those participants who indicated 'yes' they got the help they needed. Eleven did not respond to at least one of the questions in this section.
2. Only the last column is a percentage.

Generally, refugees relied on friends, family and sponsors, and refugee NGOs such as the RMS to provide them with the help they needed. For assistance with income support, refugees relied on friends as well as W&I. However, there were differences between refugee groups. Family Reunion refugees most often turned to their families for help while Quota refugees tended to use the RMS and their sponsors, as well as friends and family. Convention refugees often received help from their friends as well as government organisations such as W&I.

7.3.2 Types of problems getting help

Some participants interviewed at six months described the types of problems they had experienced getting help. Problems were similar regardless of the type of help required, and often related to communication problems due to a lack of English or not knowing where to go or not having the financial resources to get the help they required.

"I could not communicate in English to find people who might help."

Iranian Convention refugee, six months

7.4 HELP AND SUPPORT FOR *RECENTLY ARRIVED* REFUGEES INTERVIEWED AT TWO YEARS

Recently arrived refugees at two years were asked about help and support they had received in New Zealand since their last interview (see Table 7.2). Forty-two percent of this group said they had received some help. Fifty-six percent of Quota refugees had received help, as had 44 percent of Family Reunion refugees. Only 6 percent of Convention refugees (2 individuals) said they had received help or support. As is discussed below, only a small number of Convention refugees felt they still needed help to settle in New Zealand at two years (see Table 7.3 below).

At two years, 56 percent of Quota refugees and 44 percent of Family Reunion refugees had received help since their last interview. Only 6 percent of Convention refugees said they had received help.

Table 7.2 Whether *recently arrived* refugees interviewed at two years had received help since their last interview

Received help	Refugee type							
	Quota		Convention		Family Reunion		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Yes	42	56	2	6	23	44	67	42
No	33	44	30	94	29	56	92	58
Total	75	100	32	100	52	100	159	100

Note

1. Three did not respond.

Participants were asked about the types of help or support they had received. The areas where help or support was received included:

- English language (33 responses);
- health (28 responses);
- financial support, such as a W&I benefit (24 responses);
- education (16 responses);
- interpreting (8 responses);
- transport (5 responses); and
- work (3 responses).

7.5 HELP AND SUPPORT FOR *ESTABLISHED* REFUGEES

Established refugees were asked about the areas in which they needed help when they first arrived in New Zealand. Of the 185 people who responded to this question, 146 individuals discussed the main areas they had initially required help with and these included:²⁹

A number of *established* refugees said the main areas they needed help on arrival in New Zealand were with finding housing and furniture and general orientation.

- finding housing and furniture (88 responses);
- general orientation and finding out about New Zealand systems (50 responses);
- learning English (39 responses);
- financial support (38 responses);
- healthcare (29 responses);

²⁹ Four *established* refugees said they did not know.

- transport (29 responses); and
- accessing education (25 responses).

Those *established* refugees who commented on the areas in which they needed help were asked what types of help they received. Responses generally aligned with the areas participants said they needed help. The main types of help referred to were:

- finding housing and furniture (76 responses);
- financial help from W&I (61 responses);
- other financial support (31 responses);
- healthcare (36 responses);
- learning English (29 responses);
- transport (19 responses); and
- interpreters or translators (15 responses).

7.6 DIFFICULTIES GETTING HELP

Twenty-four out of 67 *recently arrived* refugees said there were areas they had not been able to get the help they needed. Most of these individuals were Quota refugees.

Recently arrived refugees at two years and *established* refugees were asked if there were areas they needed help, but there was no help available. This question was only asked of *recently arrived* refugees who said they had received help or support since their last interview, and was asked of all *established* refugees.

Twenty-four of the 67 *recently arrived* refugees (36 percent) who responded to this question said there was a time when they were not able to get the help they needed. Interestingly, most of these individuals were Quota refugees. The main areas participants were not able to get the help they needed were with English language or an English home tutor (9 responses), housing (6 responses) and finances (5 responses). Four people said they could not get the help they needed at school (such as with homework) and three people said they could not get help to find a job.

Fifty-two of the 177 *established* refugees who responded to this question (29 percent) said there was an area in which they were not able to get the help they needed. A number of these individuals said they could not get the help they needed with family reunification (13 responses).

“...sponsoring the beloved family members to New Zealand.”

Iraqi Quota refugee, five years

Other areas *established* refugees discussed not being able to get help included English language (13 responses), housing and furniture (11 responses) and finding work (9 responses). A number of people said they could not get the help they needed with general orientation (8 responses) and with daily activities such as shopping (4 responses) and transport (2 responses).

A group of Kurdish men who took part in a focus group were not positive about the help they had received with their resettlement in New Zealand. They had experienced problems getting the help they needed from W&I, HNZA and they said they had experienced a lack of support from the RMS.

“Haven’t seen anything from RMS, HNZA [HNZA], disabled organisations in New Zealand.”

Kurdish man, focus group

7.7 PARTICULARLY USEFUL SERVICES

Research participants were asked if there were particular services that were more useful or helpful than others. Of the *recently arrived* refugees interviewed at six months, 34 percent said particular services were more useful than others (see Table A.4.7, Appendix 4). Fifty-four percent of Convention refugees responded this way, compared to 38 percent of Quota refugees and 18 percent of Family Reunion refugees. At two years, 28 percent of *recently arrived* refugees said some services were particularly useful (ranging from 19 percent of Family Reunion refugees to 34 percent of Convention refugees).

At six months, a number of Quota refugees said the services provided by the RMS were of most use to them. The RMS had provided assistance including, interpreters and cross cultural workers, finding education and housing, and other guidance and support. Convention refugees often commented that the assistance they received from W&I was the most useful. Family Reunion refugees specified a range of agencies and services they found most useful including, banks, health services, the New Zealand Immigration Service (NZIS) and W&I. Other useful services generally discussed by refugees interviewed at six months were health and mental health services, churches, HNZC and ESOL home tutors.

“Agencies like [the] RMS and ESOL Home Tutors are very helpful. [The] RMS is ringing on my behalf to Telecom, Housing New Zealand [HNZC], power company and other places where I need help.”

Ethiopian Quota refugee, six months

At two years, Quota refugees still felt the services provided by the RMS were the most useful, while Convention and Family Reunion refugees most often mentioned the assistance they received from W&I. Other services and agencies mentioned by a few individuals at two years were sponsors, healthcare, the NZIS and Refugees as Survivors (RAS).

Of the 171 *established* refugees who responded to the question about useful services, 53 individuals said there were services they had found particularly useful.³⁰ Sixteen of these participants said the services provided by the RMS were the most useful, especially when they first arrived in New Zealand. A number named education as the most useful service with which they had been provided. This included seven individuals who referred to school or university study, five people who referred to learning English and three people who referred to the education their children had received. Nine people said the assistance they received from W&I was the most useful, while four people said all services were equally good.

A group of Burmese refugees living in Nelson stressed the importance of a dedicated person providing support. A person from Nelson Refugee Assistance was often named as providing invaluable support. These individuals also said their sponsors provided good support with many aspects of their initial settlement, including finding a house, connecting the telephone and power and visiting the doctor.

“Most important person is [name]. She helps with everything - shopping, going to the hospital, school etc. Even they call her in the evening and she helps.”

Burmese refugee, focus group

³⁰ Sixteen *established* refugees did not know and two did not respond.

7.8 ADDITIONAL HELP NEEDED

7.8.1 Whether more help was needed in the first six months

“Free English language to be able to communicate and act independently.”

Ethiopian Quota refugee, six months

Recently arrived refugees at six months were asked if there were aspects of life in New Zealand they would have liked more help with or information about (see Table A.4.6 in Appendix 4). Forty-six percent said there were areas they would have liked more help with. Fifty-four percent of Quota refugees said they needed more help compared to 46 percent of Convention refugees and 35 percent of Family Reunion refugees. A substantial proportion of Family Reunion refugees (15 percent) said they did not know if they would have liked more help.

The main areas participants interviewed at six months would have liked more help or advice were:

- learning English (21 responses);
- accessing education other than English language (16 responses);
- finding work (15 responses); and
- understanding immigration policy and bringing their family to New Zealand (14 responses).

A number of participants said they needed general help with understanding aspects of life in New Zealand, for example, the health system, schooling, human rights, laws and regulations and public transport. Two people said they would have liked more information about how to get New Zealand citizenship.

7.8.2 Whether help was still needed

Of the *recently arrived* refugees, 65 percent at six months and 55 percent at two years felt they still needed help to settle in New Zealand.

Research participants were asked at each interview whether they still needed help and support to settle in New Zealand. Of the *recently arrived* refugees, 65 percent felt they still needed support to settle at six months and 55 percent said they needed this support at two years (see Table 7.3). At six months, similar proportions of Quota and Family Reunion refugees felt they still needed help (67 and 68 percent respectively) compared to 58 percent of Convention refugees. At two years, only 28 percent of Convention refugees said they still needed help as did 48 percent of Family Reunion refugees. The proportion of Quota refugees who still needed help was slightly higher at two years than at six months (71 percent compared to 67 percent).

At two years, only three out of 27 refugees from Sri Lanka felt the still needed help to settle in New Zealand. This compared to 15 out of 18 refugees from South East Asia who still needed help.

There was some variation in the need for ongoing settlement support by region of origin. Of the *recently arrived* refugees interviewed at six months, a similar proportion from the Middle East, the Horn of Africa and South East Asia said they still needed help to settle in New Zealand (71, 67 and 65 percent respectively). Of the 32 refugees from South Asia (Sri Lanka), 14 individuals (44 percent) said they still needed help (many of whom were Convention refugees).

At two years, nearly all of the participants from South East Asia felt they still needed assistance to settle in New Zealand (15 out of 18 individuals), while only three out of 27 refugees from South Asia felt they needed help. Fifty-nine percent of refugees from the Middle East said they needed help at two years, as did 65 percent of those from the Horn of Africa.

It is useful to link these findings to those relating to labour market participation (see Chapter 12) and English language ability (see Chapter 10). Participants from South Asia rated their English language ability higher and were more likely to be working than were other participants at two years. Conversely, a number of South East Asians said they could not speak English well and only one was working at two years, and this group were the most likely to say they still needed help to settle.

Table 7.3 Whether recently arrived refugees still needed help to settle by refugee type and region

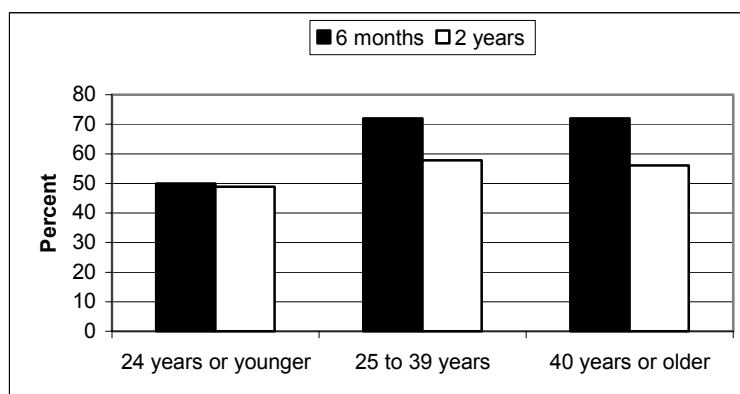
Still needed help to settle	Refugee type							
	Quota		Convention		Family Reunion		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
6 months								
Yes	62	67	23	58	45	68	130	65
No	31	33	17	43	21	32	69	35
Total	93	100	40	100	66	100	199	100
2 years								
Yes	53	71	9	28	25	48	87	55
No	22	29	23	72	27	52	72	45
Total	75	100	32	100	52	100	159	100
	Region of origin							
	Middle East		Horn of Africa		South Asia		South East Asia	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
6 months								
Yes	74	71	31	67	14	44	11	65
No	30	29	15	33	18	56	6	35
Total	104	100	46	100	32	100	17	100
2 years								
Yes	49	59	20	65	3	11	15	83
No	34	41	11	35	24	89	3	17
Total	83	100	31	100	27	100	18	100

Note

1. At six months, eight did not respond and two did not know. At two years, three did not respond.

Figure 7.2 shows the proportion of *recently arrived* refugees who felt they still needed help to settle by age group. Those 24 years or younger were less likely to feel they needed help than older research participants (particularly at six months). After two years, 49 percent of those 24 years or younger said they still needed assistance, compared to 58 percent of 25 to 39 year olds and 56 percent of those 40 years or older.

Figure 7.2 Whether *recently arrived* refugees still needed help to settle by age group n=199 (6 months), 159 (2 years)



Note

1. At six months, eight did not respond and two did not know. At two years, three did not respond.

7.8.3 Types of help that were still needed

“Our people need especially ESOL, English courses and job trainings. I am trying to get job training and income generation type job placement.”

Burmese Quota refugee, two years

The areas *recently arrived* refugees still needed help were similar at six months and two years. The three main areas were:

- help with English language;
- help with getting work; and
- financial help.

Interestingly, 30 individuals at six months said an area they needed help was sponsoring their families to New Zealand, whereas only one person mentioned needing this help at two years. Perhaps after two years research participants felt they needed to focus on settling themselves into New Zealand before taking on the responsibility of sponsoring and looking after other family members. Participants may also have become aware of the requirement to be in New Zealand for three years before sponsoring less dependent family members (see Chapter 8). Other areas discussed by refugees at six months were housing (9 responses), interpreting and translation (9 responses), transportation (9 responses) and healthcare (7 responses). At two years, 16 individuals said they still needed help with housing, 11 with interpreting and 10 with healthcare.

“English course; job training skills; how to bring the rest of my immediate family to New Zealand.”

Somali Convention refugee, six months

“Learning English in the not too distant future, because I cannot understand the bus fare.”

Somali Quota refugee, two years

Several *recently arrived* refugees felt they needed continued support with settling in New Zealand until they found employment.

When asked how long they felt they needed help to settle, *recently arrived* refugees gave a range of responses. At six months, 23 participants said they needed support for between one and three years and six participants said three to five years. Many said they needed help until they had found a job (39

responses), until their family arrived from overseas (18 responses), or until they could speak English (10 responses). Similar responses were given at two years.

Of the 186 *established* refugees who responded to this question, 73 individuals (39 percent) said they still needed help to settle in New Zealand. Table 7.4 shows the proportion of *established* refugees who still needed help to settle by region of origin. Of the 12 refugees from South East Asia, ten felt they still needed help to settle in New Zealand. This compared to one quarter of the 79 refugees from the Middle East and half of the 83 refugees from the Horn of Africa who felt they still needed help. No *established* refugees from South Asia felt they still needed help to settle in New Zealand.

As with *recently arrived* refugees, *established* refugees from South Asia were the most likely to be working in New Zealand and had better English language ability. Those from South East Asia were less likely to be working and had poorer English language.

Table 7.4 Whether established refugees still needed help to settle by region

Still needed help to settle	Region of origin									
	Middle East		Horn of Africa		South Asia		South East Asia		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Yes	20	25	43	52	0	0	10	83	73	39
No	59	75	40	48	12	100	2	17	113	61
Total number	79	100	83	100	12	100	12	100	186	100

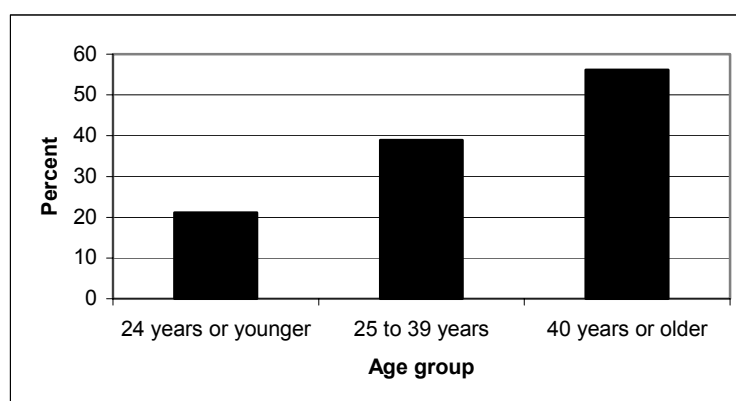
Note

1. Two did not know and one did not respond.

Figure 7.3 shows the proportion of *established* refugees who felt they still needed help to settle in New Zealand. As with *recently arrived* refugees, those 24 years or younger reported needing the least help. Twenty-one percent of those 24 years or younger said they still needed help, compared to 39 percent of those aged between 25 and 39 years and 56 percent of those aged 40 years or older.

The main area established refugees still needed support was with family reunification.

Figure 7.3 Proportion of established refugees who still needed help to settle by age group n=186



Note

1. Two did not know and one did not respond.

The main area *established* refugees said they needed help was with sponsoring family members to New Zealand (31 responses). The reasons given for wanting to sponsor family members to New Zealand were requiring emotional support and missing family. When looking at these 31 individuals in more detail, 27 had come to New Zealand with family members (including extended family) and 21 had close family in New Zealand such as a partner/spouse and/or children. In some cases, the family members that these participants wanted to sponsor to New Zealand were more distant relatives that are not included in the current family sponsored immigration policies.

Other areas where help was needed were with English language (21 responses), financial support (18 responses) and finding work (13 responses). A few others said they needed support with healthcare and with accessing skills training courses. Five people said they needed emotional support.

“I need help with getting employment. I am dependent on the benefit and I would like to get off the benefit and earn my own living.”

Somali Quota refugee, five years

“I live by myself so I need family support to help to integrate with New Zealand society.”

Ethiopian Quota refugee, five years

When asked how long they felt they needed help and support, nine *established* refugees said they needed help for between one and two years, while four said they needed ongoing support for between two and five years and another four felt they required support for more than five years. Sixteen individuals said they needed support until reunited with their family and 12 individuals until they found work. Seven individuals said they needed help until their current issue was resolved. Four people said they would need assistance ‘forever’.

7.9 HELP FROM ETHNIC GROUP

Robinson (1993) found that a pre-existing ethnic community to which refugees can turn to for emotional, material and financial strength was critical to their socio-economic success. The ethnic community can help refugees find their way in the new society while allowing them to maintain an identity with which they are familiar. In a study from the United Kingdom, Wahlbeck (1998) found that friends and relatives played an important role in helping newly arrived Kurdish refugees with their problems in London. In fact, research has shown that informal networks are more important for providing practical help than formal refugee organisations.

“People who come here from somewhere where they suffered at the hands of leaders now want to be independent.”

Service provider, focus group

Service providers who took part in focus groups provided some interesting context to issues around refugee ethnic communities. They felt strongly that cohesive, structured refugee communities were able to provide good support to members of their own community. The providers all felt that people within an ethnic group were the best people to help members of their own community and when the community was well established this was easier to do. It was noted that while some ethnic communities were cohesive, divisions were present within other communities.

“Or the person may not want to do it. Just because they are Somali, doesn’t mean they speak for the whole Somali community.”

Service provider, focus group

As with any other community, refugee communities are complex. Their particular complexity derives from the fact that refugee intakes tend to reflect the cultural, ethnic and religious diversity of the countries from which they come. In some cases some of the differences re-emerge as refugees from these groups settle in New Zealand. Consequently some communities, such as Somali and Ethiopian, Iraqi and Cambodian tend to be less internally cohesive than they appear from the outside. For example, the Ethiopian refugees have organised themselves around a number of groups such as the Oromo Community, the Ethiopian Community and the Ethiopian Association, reflecting the complexity of the community in their home country. This presents both challenges and opportunities. For service providers, it can be difficult to sufficiently fund programmes across the various groups, but in terms of a support base, these organisations are closer to the immediate needs of their members, where language and culture provide a basis for closer relationships and support.

“Some cultural groups are more cohesive than others e.g. Somalis have a structure for their community, [whereas] the Ethiopian community lacks the cohesive nature.”

Service provider,
focus group

7.9.1 Who participants considered members of their ethnic group

While most *recently arrived* and *established* refugees said people who were the same nationality as themselves were part of their ethnic group, some provided other definitions. For example, for some people factors such as language, religious beliefs and/or cultural background defined an ethnic group. Several *established* refugees said all New Zealanders were part of their ethnic group and a few people said anyone who was kind and honest was part of their ethnic group. A few people felt ethnicity was not important as they did not make this distinction.

7.9.2 Help received from ethnic group

Table 7.5 shows the proportion of *recently arrived* refugees who received support from their ethnic group in New Zealand. One half of refugees at six months said they had received support. Quota refugees indicated the highest level of support at 68 percent compared to 41 percent of Convention refugees and 33 percent of Family Reunion refugees. It is possible Family Reunion refugees indicated a lower level of support because their support systems were immediate family rather than the wider ethnic community.

At two years, 28 percent of refugees said they had received resettlement support from members of their ethnic group in the last 12 months. Just less than half of Quota refugees received this support compared to 12 percent of Family Reunion refugees and 9 percent of Convention refugees.

When interviewed at six months, all refugees from South East Asia said they had received support from their ethnic group

There were some notable differences by region of origin. Of the *recently arrived* refugees interviewed at six months, one half of refugees from the Middle East and the Horn of Africa said they had received support from their ethnic group. Of the 32 refugees from South Asia, ten said they had received support, while all 18 refugees from South East Asia said they received this support.

At two years, only two out of 27 participants from South Asia said they had received support from their ethnic group in the last 12 months, compared to 12 of the 18 individuals from South East Asia. Thirty-nine percent from the Horn of Africa said they received support from their ethnic group at two years, as did 22 percent from the Middle East.

Table 7.5 Whether *recently arrived* refugees received help from members of their ethnic group by refugee type and region

Received help from ethnic group	Refugee type							
	Quota		Convention		Family Reunion		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
6 months (since arrival)								
Yes	65	68	17	41	23	33	105	51
No	31	32	24	59	46	67	101	49
Total	96	100	41	100	69	100	206	100
2 years (in last 12 months)								
Yes	35	47	3	9	6	12	44	28
No	40	53	29	91	46	88	115	72
Total	75	100	32	100	52	100	159	100
	Region of origin							
	Middle East		Horn of Africa		South Asia		South East Asia	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
6 months (since arrival)								
Yes	55	50	22	48	10	31	18	100
No	55	50	24	52	22	69	0	0
Total	110	100	46	100	32	100	18	100
2 years (in last 12 months)								
Yes	18	22	12	39	2	7	12	67
No	65	78	19	61	25	93	6	33
Total	83	100	31	100	27	100	18	100

Note

1. At six months, two did not know and one did not respond. At two years, three did not respond.

“My younger brother was already here so my brother and other friend helped us, showing us how to live in New Zealand, with their experience.”

Burmese Quota refugee, six months

Research participants were asked about the types of support they had received. At six months, a number of *recently arrived* refugees said their ethnic group provided general orientation support, such as, showing them around, referring them to appropriate services and helping in areas such as shopping and setting up bank accounts (38 responses). A similar number of participants said members of their ethnic group provided moral and emotional support. Other areas where help was provided included with transport, providing household items, finding accommodation and interpreting and translation. A few participants said members of their ethnic group had provided financial assistance.

At two years, the main areas participants said members of their ethnic group had provided help were with transport (21 responses) and social support (17 responses). Social support included such things as providing friendship and emotional assistance. Some participants said community members helped them with interpreting (13 responses) or learning English (6 responses).

Nearly all participants said this help had been useful or very useful. A number of people said the help from community members reduced the isolation of being in a new country and generally made things easier. A few people commented that they would not have coped without the help they received.

“Without this help we couldn’t settle because they helped us learn how to get around Christchurch.”

Iranian Quota refugee, six months

Of the *established* refugees, 114 out of 176 participants (65 percent) said members of their ethnic group had provided them with resettlement help in New Zealand (see Table 7.6). As with *recently arrived* refugees, most *established* refugees from South East Asia had received help (ten out of 12 individuals), while only two out of 12 refugees from South Asia had received help. Sixty-two percent of refugees from the Middle East said they had received help, as had 72 percent from the Horn of Africa.

Differences in levels of support could be based on different needs, for example, most of the South Asian participants were Convention refugees. The cohesiveness of various ethnic communities was not explored in this research.

Table 7.6 Whether established refugees received help from members of ethnic group by region

Received help from ethnic group	Region of origin									
	Middle East		Horn of Africa		South Asia		South East Asia		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Yes	46	62	56	72	2	17	10	83	114	65
No	28	38	22	28	10	83	2	17	62	35
Total	74	100	78	100	12	100	12	100	176	100

Note

1. Thirteen did not know.

Established refugees discussed areas where members of their ethnic group provided help, including:

- transportation (56 responses);
- orientation and advice on New Zealand systems and daily life (48 responses);
- English language (32 responses);
- moral and emotional support (27 responses);
- finding accommodation and household items (28 responses);
- shopping (16 responses); and
- social support, such as, welcoming and visiting participants (16 responses).

“Well, our community was awesome. They helped us get a very quick resettlement, and understanding of New Zealand life. We felt very happy and relaxed indeed.”

Iranian refugee, five years

Most *established* refugees said the help they received from their ethnic community was useful or very useful. A number of people said that the assistance they received helped them to settle well and some said adjusting to life in New Zealand would have been difficult otherwise. Two individuals commented that the support from their ethnic group helped them to maintain their culture.

“Very useful. One night my daughter was sick and I called one member of the ethnic group and he took us to Starship Hospital and spent most of the night with us.”

Ethiopian Quota refugee, five years

A few *established* refugees mentioned that the help they received from NGOs and government agencies was more useful than the help from their ethnic group.

7.9.3 Findings from focus groups

“Not that much of a good community. We have tried to, but we are not as good as other communities, unfortunately.”

Iranian women, focus group

Some participants in focus groups discussed issues around the cohesiveness of their communities and the help and support provided by them. A group of Somali women felt the Somali community in Auckland was close and supportive. They lived close to one another and helped each other, for example, if a family member was sick or a new baby was born. The Somali women were used to having a large extended family in Somalia and because they did not have this in New Zealand they felt it was important to support each other.

The Iranian women said that their community was not so cohesive and this was an area they would like some help to change. They felt public perceptions contributed to a sense of growth and unity within the Iranian community and that it was important to educate New Zealand school children about refugees. They commented that Iranian people would be good people to educate and improve perceptions of Iranian refugees.

7.10 SERVICE PROVIDERS' PERSPECTIVES

“At RAS, the same groups of people tend to get overused and they just become exhausted. So we have just engaged our first volunteer therapist, and we were really pleased with the response we had to our call for volunteers, but it takes resources to train people etc.”

Service provider, focus group.

A number of refugee service providers in Auckland City, Mangere, Wellington and Christchurch took part in focus groups to discuss their experiences working with refugees. An area discussed by service providers was coordination between the various agencies. Many providers felt there were strong links between agencies in each area, for example, regular inter-agency meetings were held, planning for new arrivals of Quota refugees took place across sectors and refugee and migrant forums were held regularly and were a good source of information sharing. A number of people commented that the networks between agencies in Christchurch were particularly strong. Some providers noted that a key part of their role was to stay informed with what was happening in different spheres such as government and pass this on to refugee communities.

A few service providers felt there was a lack of coordination between some agencies and that a more holistic approach was needed. One example given was a lack of co-ordination and communication between W&I and the education sector.

One of the difficulties service providers discussed was their reliance on volunteers. Several felt there were huge expectations of volunteer help, many of whom also worked full-time. People have a limited time-frame for volunteer work and service providers said they often had trouble recruiting appropriate volunteers – particularly men.

An issue that came through strongly from service providers in all centres related to a lack of funding and resources. Many felt the government needed to do more

to fund and coordinate funding for services for refugees (such as for interpreters). Some of the service providers had carried out fund-raising to provide services, for example, a service provider in Christchurch was in the process of fund raising for a community warden. One service provider said they were not pressed for funding at the moment, but they had to reapply for funding annually.

“There’s self-funded community based radio, school, a community worker etc. The initiative is there, but funding is needed!”

Service provider, focus group

“Our resources have been stretched in the last year, we don’t have enough doctor time. Increasing numbers and lack of funding.”

Service provider, focus group

An issue raised by Mangere providers was that agencies required more notice from the NZIS of each Quota refugee intake to allow for planning and allocation of resources. Service providers said notification for the year’s programme would be ideal, including numbers and demographics.

“We need more preparation before they arrive, as in the US model: work with big teams in the refugee camps, doing the paperwork before the refugees hit New Zealand.”

Service provider, focus group

7.11 SUMMARY

The three refugee groups had access to, and relied upon, different services and people to assist with their resettlement. The RMS provided support to Quota refugees when they first arrived in New Zealand while family was an important support mechanism for Family Reunion refugees. Convention refugees relied more on friends and government agencies, as well as being able to access some NGO support. Participants generally got the help they needed, although many did not get sufficient help to find work.

After being in New Zealand for two years, a high proportion of *recently arrived* refugees said they still needed help to settle (55 percent). After five years, 39 percent of *established* refugees said they still needed assistance. For both groups help was needed with English language, finding work and with finances. At two years, substantially more Quota refugees than other participants said they still needed help to settle. Across both groups more South East Asians than other participants said they needed help, while fewer South Asians said they still needed help.

A number of *established* refugees said they needed help bringing family members to New Zealand, although many already had close family in New Zealand and were wanting to bring more distant relatives who would not meet current family sponsored immigration policies. A number of *recently arrived* refugees mentioned needing help with family reunification at six months but did not bring this up again at two years. These participants may have shifted their focus to settling themselves before taking on responsibility for other family members or they may have become aware of the three-year wait for sponsoring less dependent relatives (see Chapter 8).

English language ability and finding work are crucial aspects of successful resettlement. Therefore, it is not surprising that those who said they still needed

help to settle were mostly those who were not in work and who had poorer English language skills.

Ethnic group support was important to many participants with one half of *recently arrived* refugees at six months and 65 percent of *established* refugees saying they received this support. There were differences by region of origin, with the majority of South East Asians receiving this support and fewer South Asians receiving this assistance. This reflects the varying importance placed on community support and the cohesiveness of communities as well as the differing needs of the groups.

8 FAMILY REUNIFICATION

8.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter explores the importance to refugees of family and family reunification. Research participants were asked about their experiences sponsoring family to New Zealand and any barriers or difficulties they faced. Participants also discussed their intentions to sponsor family to New Zealand in the future and described the level of contact they had with family members in their former countries. The topics covered in this chapter include:

- the context around family reunification;
- the importance of family;
- sponsoring family to New Zealand;
- the process of sponsoring;
- whether refugees were intending to sponsor family; and
- family back home.

Key themes

- ➔ Many participants were living with family members in New Zealand and many also had family members overseas. Those overseas were often extended family members, such as siblings, parents and in-laws.
 - ➔ The majority of participants felt it was important to have their family with them in New Zealand, and this included extended family such as parents, grandparents, siblings, grandchildren, in-laws and other family members.
 - ➔ Of the *recently arrived* refugees, 73 percent at six months and 53 percent at two years said they were intending to sponsor family members to New Zealand in the future.
 - ➔ Seventy-four *established* refugees had tried to sponsor family to New Zealand and just over half had been successful with their applications. A common reason for unsuccessful applications was not meeting family sponsored immigration criteria.
 - ➔ Two thirds of the 45 *established* refugees who had sponsored family to New Zealand, or who were in the process of sponsoring, said they had found the process difficult. A particular difficulty was obtaining the necessary documentation to support their application.
 - ➔ A number of participants said they wanted to sponsor family to New Zealand but did not think it would be possible. The main difficulties referred to were the cost involved (including the application fee and the costs associated with airfares and providing for family members on arrival), followed by recent changes to family sponsored immigration policy.
 - ➔ Eighty-four percent of *recently arrived* refugees at two years and 88 percent of *established* refugees said they maintained contact with their family in their home country.
-

8.2 CONTEXT

The literature shows that family reunification is very important to refugees (Leisure and Community Services Unit, 1997; UNHCR, 1997; the Canadian

Taskforce on Mental Health Issues Affecting Immigrants and Refugees, 1988; NGO Sector, 2000; and Refugee Council of Australia, 2000).

Reunification with family can become a refugee's main pre-occupation. In focus groups completed in Australia, refugees spoke of the pain of separation from elderly parents and siblings (Refugee Council of Australia, 2000, p.93). A report on refugee resettlement in Sweden noted that when a close relative is left behind, the newly arrived refugees devote almost all their energy to trying to get them out of the camp and preferably into Sweden to join the rest of their family (National Integration Office, 2001).

Research associates provided some context to family reunification issues for refugees. They agreed that family reunification was important to all refugee communities. They felt that refugees often had a poor understanding of the process of sponsoring family to New Zealand and had poor information networks to obtain this information. They also noted that the sponsoring process was difficult for refugees, for example, they often required papers and documentation from their home countries that were very difficult to obtain. The cost of sponsoring family members through the Family Category was another difficulty, especially given that refugee applicants are often not in a strong financial position.

8.2.1 Family sponsored immigration policy

People from refugee-like situations come to New Zealand to join family members through family sponsored immigration policies. The family sponsored immigration policies include the Family Category, which enables close family members of New Zealand residents and citizens to apply for residence.

In October 2001, the government made a number of changes to the Family Category including:

- expanding the definitions of dependent children, adult children and siblings, and parents, to recognise a wider range of family structures, but requiring adult, less dependent family members (siblings and adult children) to have a job offer in New Zealand;
- strengthening sponsors' legal obligations to ensure that sponsors take more responsibility for the family members they bring to New Zealand;
- closing the Humanitarian Category; and
- opening the Family Quota and Refugee Family Quota Category.

Through the Family Category, spouses, de facto partners and dependent children have the highest priority for family reunification. Parents, adult children, and adult siblings are also eligible to apply but must meet additional criteria. For example, a parent can be sponsored if the centre of gravity of their family is in New Zealand.³¹ Since October 2001, sponsors of less dependent relatives (parents, adult children and siblings) must have held New Zealand residence for at least three years. This requirement was implemented to ensure sponsors, including refugee sponsors, have the chance to become established in New

³¹ For example, if the number of their children lawfully and permanently in New Zealand is greater than those in any other single country.

Zealand before undertaking sponsorship obligations. Sponsors, who are themselves refugees, must sign a declaration that, if necessary, they will provide accommodation for the first two years of the family member's residence in New Zealand.

The Humanitarian Category enabled family members of New Zealanders to be granted residence where serious humanitarian circumstances existed and New Zealand residence was the only option to resolve those circumstances. This category had a wider definition of family and was therefore used by refugees to sponsor family to New Zealand. A new balloted Refugee Family Quota Category for refugee-linked applicants who do not qualify under the Refugee Quota or standard Family Category was introduced in July 2002. The quota is set at 300 places per year. While none of the refugees interviewed for this research came through this new category, they may apply to sponsor their family members this way. Application processing times under the Refugee Family Quota Category are significantly faster than those under the Humanitarian Category. Additionally, the new category is not as expensive for applicants, as they do not have to pay for expensive and often inappropriate psychiatric reports in order to demonstrate emotional harm.

Family reunification is also provided for in the Refugee Quota Category. Of the 750 places in the 2003/04 Refugee Quota, 300 were set aside for family reunification. Entry through the Refugee Quota Category is the first preference of many refugee families seeking reunification because, unlike the Family Category or Refugee Family Quota Category, it does not require a fee, standard immigration documentation, or a three-year residence requirement for sponsors.

8.2.2 Family members in New Zealand and overseas

It is useful to look at the number of family members research participants lived with in New Zealand, as well as the number who were overseas. Of the *recently arrived* refugees, 185 out of 209 participants were living with family members in New Zealand at six months. All Family Reunion refugees were living with at least one family member, while Convention refugees were the most likely to be living without family (14 out of 42 Convention refugees were living without family members).

Of the *established* refugees, 170 out of 189 participants were living with family members (see Table 8.1). A number of participants also had family in New Zealand although not in the same household. Of the 209 *recently arrived* refugees interviewed at six months, 121 had family in New Zealand outside of their household, as did 125 out of 187 *established* refugees.³² See Table A.4.9 in Appendix 4 for numbers of family members *recently arrived* refugees had in New Zealand but not in the same household.

³² Two *established* refugees did not know.

Table 8.1 Number of participants who had family living in their household by number of family members

Number of family members	Refugee type				<i>Established</i>
	<i>Recently arrived</i> (six months)				
	Quota	Convention	Family Reunion	Total	
	n	n	n	n	n
0	10	14	0	24	19
1 to 2	20	14	27	61	48
3 to 4	32	8	31	71	36
5 or more	34	6	13	53	86
Total	96	42	71	209	189

Research participants were asked how many of their family members were living overseas and their relationship to them. Two hundred and four *recently arrived* refugees responded to this question and 180 had family members overseas. Of the 185 *established* refugees who responded to this question, all apart from 32 had family members overseas. For the purposes of this question, family members were defined as those listed in Table 8.2. Research participants often had a broader understanding of ‘family’ and so it is likely they had other people they considered family members overseas outside of these categories.

The type of family members overseas were mainly extended family including siblings, parents, and in laws. A smaller number were ‘close’ family members such as a spouse or partner and/or children. Family sponsored immigration policy for parents, siblings and adult children has additional criteria that must be met, which sometimes makes it difficult for refugees to sponsor them to New Zealand. To ease these difficulties, standard requirements such as police certificates and identity documentation can be waived, in recognition of refugees’ unique circumstances. The family reunification places in the Refugee Quota Category also provide an avenue for refugee family reunification that does not involve an application fee or standard immigration documentation.

Table 8.2 Types of family members overseas

Family member overseas	Refugee type				
	Recently arrived (6 months)				Established
	Quota	Convention	Family Reunion	Total	
	n	n	n	n	n
Sibling	71	36	50	157	142
Parent	40	33	26	99	77
Sibling-in-law	34	19	33	86	102
Parent-in-law	21	22	16	59	50
Daughter	9	6	16	31	21
Child-in-law	13	4	11	28	8
Son	11	3	11	25	17
Spouse/Partner	6	6	0	12	8
None of these family members	13	1	10	24	32
Total participants	93	41	70	204	185

Note

1. Five *recently arrived* refugees did not know. Four *established* refugees did not know.
2. The question asked 'Do any of the following members of your family live outside of New Zealand'? Therefore, the data represents the type of family members overseas rather than the total number. For example, if a participant had two daughters overseas, they are only represented once under daughter.
3. Participants could indicate multiple responses to indicate each family type they had overseas.

8.3 IMPORTANCE OF FAMILY

A recent study looking at family structures across a number of cultures acknowledged the complexity of the concept of 'family' (Elliott and Gray, 2000). Participants from all cultures included in the study considered family to be a social rather than biological unit. Aside from the nuclear family, definitions of family in the cultures studied included parents, grandparents, adopted members and siblings, and, depending on circumstances, extended to clan, tribe or village associates.

Both *recently arrived* and *established* refugees were asked which family members it was important for them to have in New Zealand. Participants indicated a diverse range of people. Nearly all refugees said it was important to have their nuclear family with them (including their spouse or partner and/or children), but most participants' concept of family extended beyond this. Many felt it was also important to have other family in New Zealand, such as parents, grandparents, siblings, grandchildren and in-laws. Other participants also mentioned their parent's siblings and their children. A few individuals considered their friends to be family and felt it was important that they were in New Zealand. It is important to note that many of the extended family members described by research participants would not be eligible for residence under current family sponsored immigration policy (see 8.2.1 above). The government explicitly excluded extended kinship networks from the definition of family when this was reviewed for immigration purposes in 2000.

When asked why it was important to have these family members in New Zealand, many participants considered the reasons to be self-evident. Common responses were "because they are my family" or "because they are a very important part of my life" or "because I want to be with them".

"To support each other. Do you think any tree can have life without its branches. So I want to live with my close family members."

Ethiopian Quota refugee, five years

"... my brother is chased by the Government people who are hurting him. Besides, his coming here will make me feel better. At least, we will try to help each other. He will be away from any unfair harm."

Iraqi Quota refugee, six months

A number of participants said they wanted their family to live in New Zealand because they were concerned about their safety and felt they would be safer here. There was a sense of responsibility to those still overseas and facing hard conditions while they themselves had a better life here.

“My wife and my children are the closest people to me. I can't leave my mother who gave me my life, and while I have a happy life in New Zealand, my brother and my sisters have a hard life in Vietnam. I can't bear it.”

Vietnamese Quota refugee, five years

Several *established* refugees said they wanted their family here so they could form strong support networks in New Zealand. Participants also said they felt depressed or lonely without their family members. Some felt they would not be able to resettle well until their family had joined them and were safe in New Zealand. A few *established* refugees mentioned they wanted their family in New Zealand so they could help them financially.

“Retired people should rest at home, but my retired family are still working and they have a hard life. I should give them the real retirement which they are entitled to. Also, I'm too depressed without them here.”

Iranian Quota refugee, five years

8.4 SPONSORING FAMILY TO NEW ZEALAND

The family sponsored immigration policies through which refugees may sponsor family members to New Zealand are outlined above (8.2.1). Research participants were asked if they had sponsored or tried to sponsor family members to New Zealand. Eighteen percent of *recently arrived* refugees interviewed at six months had. There was not much difference by refugee type.

At two years, a smaller proportion of participants (16 percent) said they had sponsored or tried to sponsor family members to New Zealand in the past year. This smaller proportion is probably due to the refugees learning about the three-year wait for sponsoring less dependent relatives. *Recently arrived* refugees would be more likely to want to sponsor family members once more settled.

Table 8.3 shows whether participants had been successful, or otherwise, in their attempt to bring family members to New Zealand. At six months, only two out of the 38 people who had tried had been successful (or partially successful). A further 21 individuals were still in the process and were not yet sure of the outcome. Of the two individuals who had successful applications, one Family Reunion refugee had sponsored two family members and one Convention refugee had sponsored five family members.

At two years, seven out of 24 participants had successfully sponsored family members, and a further five were still in the process. Of those who had been successful, three were Convention refugees, three were Family Reunion refugees and one was a Quota refugee. These individuals sponsored between one and five family members.

Established refugees had been in New Zealand for long enough that a number had tried to sponsor family to come and live with them. In total, 74 had tried to sponsor family members and just over half had been successful with their applications (for some or all of their family members). Four individuals were still in the process and were not yet sure of the outcome.

Seventy-four *established* refugees had tried to sponsor family to New Zealand and just over half of them had been successful with their applications.

Table 8.3 Whether participants succeeded in sponsoring family members to New Zealand

Successfully sponsored family members	Refugee type		
	Recently arrived		Established
	6 months	2 years	
	n	n	n
Yes	1	7	26
Some of them	1	0	15
Still in process	21	5	4
No	15	12	29
Total number	38	24	74

Note

1. At two years, one *recently arrived* refugee did not respond.

Table 8.4 shows the number of family members whom *established* refugees had successfully sponsored to New Zealand. Thirteen individuals had sponsored one family member and, at the other end of the spectrum, five people had sponsored eight or more family members.

Table 8.4 Number of family members *established* refugees had sponsored to New Zealand

Number of family members	Total n
1	13
2 to 4	16
5 to 7	7
8 or more	5
Total number	41

8.4.1 Reasons for unsuccessful applications

Many *recently arrived* refugees had not been in New Zealand for long enough to sponsor family to New Zealand.³³ At six months, 15 individuals said they had been unsuccessful in their attempt to bring family members to New Zealand and ten of these individuals said they knew why. At two years, 11 out of 12 participants knew why their application had been unsuccessful. Reasons given at six months and two years were similar: they submitted incomplete information, the October 2001 changes to Family Category meant they were unsuccessful (i.e. they had not been in New Zealand for three years) or they did not have enough money.

“The immigration laws changed, I couldn’t do anything for my daughter.”

Iraqi Family Reunion refugee

Of the *established* refugees, 29 people had been unsuccessful with their application to sponsor family members to New Zealand and 15 people were only

“We were unsuccessful because the centre of gravity of the family is not in New Zealand I’ve been told.”

Iraqi Quota refugee, five years

³³ The changes to the Family Category introduced in October 2001 required sponsors to have been in New Zealand for at least three years before sponsoring family here. This requirement does not apply to family members who are resettled under the Refugee Quota Category.

able to sponsor some of their family members. Twenty-three of these people knew why their application had been unsuccessful. Twelve people said their application had been unsuccessful because of changes to immigration policy or because they did not meet the family sponsored immigration criteria. For example, their family's centre of gravity was not in New Zealand (for parent sponsorship). A further five people said they did not have the correct documentation and another three said only that the response from the New Zealand Immigration Service (NZIS) was not positive. Two people said they had not registered all of their family members on their application when they came to New Zealand.³⁴

"I was told by the NZIS that I needed proof as to whether my siblings are refugees or not. And I didn't know how to prove that!"

Somali refugee, five years

8.5 EASE OF SPONSORING PROCESS

A number of participants said they found the process of sponsoring family members to New Zealand difficult.

Research participants were asked to rate how easy or difficult they had found the process of sponsoring family to New Zealand. At six months, only those who had successfully sponsored family members to New Zealand were asked this question (although three individuals who were in the process of sponsoring family also responded). Of the *recently arrived* refugees interviewed at two years and the *established* refugees, those who had been successful or were still in the application process were asked this question.

"It is difficult because I don't have enough money to pay for the application, the airfares, medical and police certificate. This has made it difficult for me to sponsor my family."

Ethiopian Quota refugee, six months

A number of participants said they found the process of sponsoring family members to New Zealand difficult. Of the *recently arrived* refugees, four out of five participants at six months and nine out of 12 participants at two years said they found the process difficult. Of the *established* refugees, 30 out of 45 participants said they found the process difficult. A few individuals said they found the process of sponsoring easy (including one *recently arrived* refugee interviewed at six months, three at two years and 12 *established* refugees).

Research participants discussed the aspects of the sponsoring process they had found difficult. The main difficulties were related to the costs associated with sponsoring family (including airfares), the length of time it took, the process being hard to understand, the lottery aspect (for the Refugee Family Quota Category) and lack of information.

"Cost; it costs money and when you apply without knowing anything about how to apply, and where you go, and what steps you must follow."

Iraqi Family Reunion refugee, two years

³⁴ Some family members must be declared on their sponsor's application for residence. For example, principal applicants under dependent child policy must have been declared as dependent children on their parent's application for residence. Such declarations are required to minimise the opportunity for identity fraud. Previous declarations are often the only proof of identity and relationships for refugees, who often cannot provide this documentation.

“When applying to sponsor, it takes three to four months. Interview takes a long time. When everything is processed it’s not supposed to be a lottery. Everyone needs to live his life and people must understand how hard it is.”

Ethiopian Quota refugee, two years

Many *established* refugees commented on the procedures of the NZIS and felt the sponsoring process was bureaucratic. This comment was often in relation to the difficulty obtaining the documentation that was required for an application. Others commented on a lack of understanding of family sponsored immigration policy, the cost involved (including airfares) and the amount of time it took. A few people said current immigration policy was the reason they could not bring their family to New Zealand.

“NZIS officers do not accept application, even if they accept application, they do not respond at all, (there is) too much bureaucracy.”

Ethiopian Quota refugee, five years

“Immigration rules, documentation, it’s hard to get information to and from the people being sponsored as they are in a country where it is hard to reach people.”

Somali Quota refugee, five years

Twelve *established* refugees said they found the process easy. Four of these individuals said this was because they had all the correct documentation. Other factors that were raised by these participants included receiving help from the Refugee and Migrant Service (RMS) (3 responses), the efficiency of the NZIS (2 responses) and being helped by someone with good English (2 responses).

“It took a short time to get them to New Zealand. No extra documents were needed after lodging the application for the first time.”

Iraqi Quota refugee, five years

8.6 INTENDING TO SPONSOR FAMILY

Table 8.5 shows the proportion of refugees who indicated an intention to sponsor family members to New Zealand in the future. Of the *recently arrived* refugees, 73 percent of participants interviewed at six months were intending to sponsor family members. The proportion intending to sponsor was very similar across all three refugee groups. At two years, 53 percent of this group said they were intending to sponsor family members to New Zealand. A higher proportion of Family Reunion refugees (62 percent) were intending to sponsor family than Convention (46 percent) or Quota refugees (49 percent). Sixty-one percent of *established* refugees were intending to sponsor family members to New Zealand.

Of the *recently arrived* refugees, 73 percent at six months and 53 percent at two years said they were intending to sponsor family members to New Zealand in the future.

Most of the Burmese refugees who took part in a focus group had family members in New Zealand and were happy that this was the case. They all said they would like to sponsor other family to New Zealand once they were more established and able to afford it.

Sixty-one percent of *established* refugees were intending to sponsor family to New Zealand.

Table 8.5 Whether participants were intending to sponsor family members to New Zealand

Intending to sponsor	Refugee type					
	Recently arrived				Established	
	6 months		2 years		n	%
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Yes	146	73	79	53	110	61
No	55	27	70	47	70	39
Total	201	100	149	100	180	100

Note

1. At six months, seven *recently arrived* refugees did not know and one did not respond. At two years, 11 did not know and two did not respond. Eight *established* refugees did not know and one did not respond.

Around six in ten recently arrived refugees interviewed at six months and at two years wanted to sponsor family to New Zealand but felt they were not able to do so.

A paper prepared by the NGO sector in New Zealand (NGO Sector, 2000) notes that policy requirements for refugee family reunification were often unachievable, requiring fees, documentation and medical and psychiatric reports.³⁵ This NGO report has been systematically responded to by the government through responses provided by government agencies at the National Refugee Resettlement Forum (tripartite meetings). A number of *recently arrived* refugees wanted to sponsor family members to New Zealand but felt they were not able to do so. Fifty-nine percent felt this way at six months as did 57 percent at two years (see Table A.4.10 in Appendix 4). Of the *established* refugees, 125 out of 186 (67 percent) wanted to sponsor family to New Zealand but thought they would not be able to do so.

Table 8.6 shows the reasons participants felt they would not be able to sponsor family to New Zealand. The table relates to *recently arrived* refugees interviewed at six months but these participants raised similar issues at two years. The issues raised by *established* refugees were also similar. The main reason was the high cost of sponsoring. This includes not only the application fee, but costs associated with airfares and needing to initially support the family on arrival. This included some who said they were not able to sponsor family members due to being unemployed. *Recently arrived* Family Reunion refugees were particularly likely to refer to difficulties with cost.

“I cannot afford it. I’m having difficulties with the new regulations at NZIS for new applications.”

Iraqi Family Reunion refugee, six months

“It takes long time to process applications. The cost of sponsoring family members, and policy changes make it hard to succeed in sponsoring someone.”

Somali Quota refugee, six months

Another reason related to the October 2001 changes to the family sponsored immigration policies and the sponsoring process and/or immigration policies being difficult or not understood. Participants did not always go into detail of how immigration policy changes made it difficult for them to sponsor their family. Those who did said they had not been in New Zealand long enough, or their family were not included in the Family Category. *Recently arrived* refugees often referred to the requirement to have lived in New Zealand for three years before sponsoring family members.

³⁵ Psychiatric reports were required for many applicants under the now closed Humanitarian Category. They are not required for the Refugee Family Quota Category or any other category.

“The new immigration policy, demands that the applicant have stayed three years in New Zealand - to qualify for sponsorship. The cost it involves is not affordable. The application could take more than a couple of years pending decision.”

Ethiopian Quota refugee, two years

Some individuals said they could not sponsor family members because of their age.³⁶ A few *established* refugees said they had not registered their family members when they came to New Zealand.³⁷

Table 8.6 Reasons participants felt they were not able to sponsor family to New Zealand

Refugee type	
Recently arrived (6 months)	Established
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ High cost (101) ▪ Recent changes to family sponsored immigration policy (39) ▪ Sponsoring process and/or immigration policies difficult or not understood (30) ▪ Immigration policy in general (7) ▪ Age (6) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Financial constraints (89) ▪ Sponsoring process and/or immigration policy difficult or not understood (49) ▪ Recent changes to family sponsored immigration policy (34) ▪ Too young to sponsor family (4) ▪ Family members not registered on residence application (2)

“Cost - I can't afford lawyer's fees. New immigration law also stop me from sponsoring someone here.”

Afghan Family Reunion refugee, two years

Note:

1. Participants could give multiple responses.

“Because of my language problem, I don't know what I should do. I don't know how much things cost.”

Iranian Quota refugee, six months

“I don't have a full-time job. I don't have enough income to support them.”

Sri Lankan Convention refugee, two years

“First costs, and I'm not aware of how to do it now. Before RMS was helping us, now we must go through immigration's new regulations and rules. It's something not easy to follow.”

Iraqi Quota refugee, five years

Difficulties with the October 2001 changes to family sponsored immigration policies, including the closure of the Humanitarian Category, were raised by many research participants. Several service providers who took part in focus groups said they were not supportive of the policy changes. Service providers specifically took issue with the requirements for sponsors to be in New Zealand

“The first three years are the time of highest need, not the least need, but policy rode right over top of that.”

Service provider, focus group

³⁶ Sponsors are generally required to be 17 years or older.

³⁷ Some family members must be declared on their sponsor's application for residence. For example, principal applicants under dependent child policy must have been declared as dependent children on their parent's application for residence.

for three years before sponsoring and to provide accommodation and support for two years. Many providers felt the former Humanitarian Category provided an option for refugees to bring their families to New Zealand, although some providers also acknowledged problems with this category.

“The loss of the Humanitarian Category has had an enormous impact on our clients. We are seeing more desperation, despite faults of previous policy ... it needs to be investigated again, because it’s causing great hardship.”

Service provider, focus group

The changes to immigration policy were relatively new when the research participants were interviewed, which may have created some of the confusion evident. Immigration policy for family members has always been focused on close family, while also allowing parents, siblings and adult children to be sponsored under certain circumstances. The Humanitarian Category was closed, but a Refugee Family Quota Category opened. Although the numbers are capped, it is less expensive for applicants.

8.7 FAMILY BACK HOME

8.7.1 Contact with family back home

Eighty-four percent of recently arrived refugees and 88 percent of established refugees maintained contact with their families overseas.

Recently arrived refugees interviewed at two years and *established* refugees were asked if they maintained contact with family members who lived overseas. Eighty-four percent of *recently arrived* refugees said they did, as did 88 percent of *established* refugees (see Table 8.7). Of the *recently arrived* refugees, 90 percent of Convention and 89 percent of Family Reunion refugees were in contact with their families, compared to 79 percent of Quota refugees. A number of Quota refugees had spent time in refugee camps and may still have family members in these camps. It is likely that individuals in camps would be difficult to contact, which may account for the lower rate for Quota refugees.

Table 8.7 Whether participants maintained contact with family members overseas

Maintained contact	Refugee type									
	Recently arrived (2 years)								Established	
	Quota		Convention		Family Reunion		Total		n	%
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Yes	60	79	28	90	47	89	135	84	167	88
No	16	21	3	10	6	11	25	16	22	12
Total	76	100	31	100	53	100	160	100	189	100

Note

1. One *recently arrived* refugee did not know and one did not respond.

Research participants were asked about the types of contact they had with their family members over the last year. The main way participants kept in contact with family was by telephone, with 124 *recently arrived* refugees and 162 *established* refugees specifying this method. They also wrote to their family (including 60 *recently arrived* refugees and 79 *established* refugees). Sixteen *recently arrived* refugees and 15 *established* refugees said they kept in contact

with their families via the internet or email. Twenty-one *established* refugees and one *recently arrived* refugee said they had visited family overseas.

8.7.2 Visiting or returning to former countries

Only *established* refugees were asked if they expected to return to or visit their former countries in the future. This was because they had been in New Zealand for longer and had time to settle and consider this option. Sixty-five percent of *established* refugees said they expected to return or visit their home countries.³⁸

“If peace returns to Somalia, I would like to see my birthplace, relatives, friends and neighbours if they are still alive.”

Somali Quota refugee, five years

“I like my country and I miss many friends and neighbours. I have very fond memories.”

Iraqi Quota refugee, five years

The timeframe for a return visit was often unknown. Others gave a timeframe for when they expected to return:

- less than two years (17 responses);
- two to five years (24 responses);
- six to ten years (10 responses); and
- more than ten years (2 responses).

A group of Kurdish men who took part in a focus group said their main concerns were their families and the situation in their home country. These men said they would rather be in Iraq and hoped the situation would improve so they could return.

“Big concern about family back in Iraq – it’s very stressful for us. [We] were part of a big group/camp, then came here and left so many people behind. It’s really difficult now, a lot of pressure.”

Kurdish man, focus group

8.8 SUMMARY

Family reunification is a very important issue for refugees. Although many participants were already living with family in New Zealand and/or had family in New Zealand outside of their households, many also had family living overseas. In many cases the family they would like to sponsor to New Zealand were extended family who would not be eligible under current family sponsored immigration policy.

A number of participants felt they would not be able to sponsor family to New Zealand and *recently arrived* and *established* refugees had similar reasons for this. The main difficulty was the cost involved. A number also discussed difficulties with recent changes to family sponsored immigration policy or felt the sponsoring process and/or immigration policy was difficult to follow or to understand. For *recently arrived* refugees, the requirement to have been in New Zealand for three years was a particular issue.

³⁸ Seventeen *established* refugees did not know if they intended to visit or return to their home countries.

Around nine in ten participants maintained contact with family overseas. Slightly less *recently arrived* Quota refugees were in contact with family, perhaps because it is difficult to contact those in refugee camps. Around two thirds of *established* refugees planned to return home. Some would prefer to be living in their home country.

9 HEALTH

9.1 INTRODUCTION

This section describes research participants' self-assessed health status and their access to, and use of, health services in New Zealand. The type of care and service participants and their families received from healthcare providers is also discussed. The topics covered in this chapter include:

- the context around health;
- participants' health generally;
- health problems or disabilities;
- emotional problems;
- access to a general practitioner;
- use of other healthcare services;
- use of hospitals;
- overall impressions of healthcare in New Zealand; and
- children's health.

Key themes

- ➔ Of the *recently arrived* refugees, 45 percent interviewed at six months and 50 percent at two years rated their health as very good or excellent. Thirty-three percent rated their health as good at both interviews while 22 percent at six months and 17 percent at two years rated their health as fair or poor. Convention refugees rated their health higher than other research participants.
- ➔ The majority of those interviewed indicated that their health had either improved in New Zealand or remained the same as on arrival. A smaller proportion of participants said their health was worse.
- ➔ Women were more likely to respond that their health had worsened in New Zealand. At six months, 24 percent of women said their health was worse than when they arrived compared to 9 percent of men. Of the *established* refugees, 23 percent of women said their health was worse compared to 16 percent of men. Common reasons for health being worse were developing a medical condition (such as asthma) or concern about family overseas.
- ➔ The most common reasons *recently arrived* refugees gave for improvements to their health were feeling safe and secure, and having less stress in their lives. The most common reasons *established* refugees gave for improved health was access to healthcare and feeling safe.
- ➔ At two years, 33 *recently arrived* refugees said they had a long-term medical problem. A number noted the impact on their ability to work or carry out daily activities.
- ➔ Around one third of both *recently arrived* refugees interviewed at six months and *established* refugees said they had experienced emotional problems as a result of past experiences and moving to and settling in New Zealand. At six months, more Convention refugees than other participants said they had experienced these problems.
- ➔ Twelve percent of *recently arrived* refugees interviewed at six months and 16 percent of *established* refugees said they had needed to see a doctor at

some stage but were not able to see one. A common reason for this was the cost involved.

- Half of *recently arrived* refugees interviewed at six months said their children's health had improved since arriving in New Zealand. Two thirds of *established* refugees said their children's health had improved.
 - Participants were overall very satisfied with the healthcare they and their children had received in New Zealand, with particular emphasis on the good service, and kind and caring staff. A small number raised concerns with their healthcare, mostly about long waiting times for treatment.
-

9.2 CONTEXT

Refugees resettling in New Zealand, like other New Zealanders on low incomes, are eligible for a Community Services Card, which entitles them to free outpatient treatment at hospitals and a maximum subsidy for General Practitioner (GP) visits and prescriptions. Refugee-specific community education and health programmes are funded by the government, in addition to community liaison and coordinator positions that assist refugees with gaining access to health services in the community.

This research does not explore the mental health of participants. Though this is an accepted issue for refugees, the project team considered mental health to be a particularly sensitive issue beyond the scope and nature of this research. Research participants were asked about emotional problems experienced as a result of past experiences and moving to and settling into a new country. Information is used from other research that has been completed in the refugee mental health area to supplement the information from the questionnaire about emotional problems.

9.3 PARTICIPANTS' HEALTH GENERALLY

Prior research into physical health issues for refugees in New Zealand is somewhat limited. A report by the NGO Sector in New Zealand (NGO Sector, 2000) is one of the few that looks at physical health issues in general terms and notes that refugees and asylum seekers face unique health problems. These problems relate to their experiences as refugees and poor access to and use of healthcare in the country of origin and/or first asylum. The Ministry of Health has developed a Refugee Health Care Handbook for general practitioners and other health workers who care for refugees (Ministry of Health, 2001).

When first interviewed at six months, 45 percent of *recently arrived* refugees rated their health as excellent or very good, 33 percent rated their health as good and 22 percent as fair or poor (see Table 9.1). There were some differences between the three refugee groups. Only 33 percent of Family Reunion refugees rated their health as excellent or very good compared to 47 percent of Quota refugees and 60 percent of Convention refugees.

Recently arrived refugees interviewed at two years rated their health similarly to the first interview. Overall, half of participants rated their health as excellent or very good, 33 percent rated their health as good and the remaining 17 percent

rated their health as fair or poor. A higher proportion of Convention and Family Reunion refugees rated their health as excellent or very good at two years than they did at six months. The proportion of Quota refugees who rated their health as excellent or very good decreased slightly from 47 percent at six months to 43 percent at two years.

Table 9.1 Health status of recently arrived refugees

Health status	Refugee type							
	Quota		Convention		Family Reunion		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
6 months								
Excellent	24	25	15	36	11	15	50	24
Very good	21	22	10	24	13	18	44	21
Good	34	35	11	26	25	35	70	33
Fair	9	9	6	14	14	20	29	14
Poor	8	8	0	0	8	11	16	8
Total	96	100	42	100	71	100	209	100
2 years								
Excellent	16	21	16	52	5	9	37	23
Very good	17	22	7	23	19	36	43	27
Good	28	36	7	23	18	34	53	33
Fair	7	9	1	3	10	19	18	11
Poor	9	12	0	0	1	2	10	6
Total	77	100	31	100	53	100	161	100

Note

1. At two years, one did not respond.

Established refugees were asked to rate their health status. Forty-five percent rated their health as excellent or very good, 29 percent as good and 25 percent as fair or poor (see Table 9.2).

Table 9.2 Health status of established refugees

Health status	Total n	Total %
Excellent	43	23
Very good	42	22
Good	55	29
Fair	25	13
Poor	23	12
Total	188	100

Note

1. One did not respond.

9.3.1 Participants' health compared to arrival

Research participants were asked to rate their health at each interview compared to when they arrived in New Zealand or when they were last interviewed (see Table 9.3). At six months, 45 percent of *recently arrived* refugees believed their health to be much better or somewhat better than when they arrived in New Zealand. Thirty-nine percent said their health was about the same and 16 percent said their health was worse. Around half of Quota and Family Reunion refugees said their health was better at six months than at arrival compared to 28 percent of Convention refugees. Convention refugees rated their health higher than other

At two years, three quarters of Convention refugees felt their health was about the same as it was at six months.

research participants at six months so it may also have been the case that their health was better on arrival. The proportion who felt their health was worse at six months ranged from 13 percent of Quota refugees to 19 percent of Convention refugees.

Participants in general felt they had better health at six months than they did on arrival.

At two years, 37 percent of *recently arrived* refugees considered their health to be better than when they were interviewed at six months. Half of refugees at two years said their health was about the same as at six months and 13 percent said their health was worse. Convention refugees were the most likely to feel their health was about the same, as at the first interview, although Convention refugees overall rated their health as being better at six months than did other refugee groups. Forty-three percent of Quota refugees and 40 percent of Family Reunion refugees said their health was better at two years compared to 19 percent of Convention refugees. The proportion who felt their health was worse at two years ranged from 6 percent of Convention refugees to 15 percent of Quota refugees.

Table 9.3 Health status of *recently arrived* refugees compared to arrival in New Zealand (or last interview)

Health status	Refugee type							
	Quota		Convention		Family Reunion		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
6 months (compared to arrival)								
Much better	25	26	3	7	9	13	37	18
Somewhat better	20	21	9	21	27	38	56	27
About the same	38	40	22	52	22	31	82	39
Somewhat worse	9	9	8	19	12	17	29	14
Much worse	4	4	0	0	1	1	5	2
Total	96	100	42	100	71	100	209	100
2 years (compared to last interview)								
Much better	16	21	2	6	8	15	26	16
Somewhat better	17	22	4	13	13	25	34	21
About the same	32	42	23	74	25	47	80	50
Somewhat worse	8	10	2	6	7	13	17	11
Much worse	4	5	0	0	0	0	4	2
Total	77	100	31	100	53	100	161	100

Note

1. At two years, one did not know.

Four in ten established refugees said their health was better at five years than when they arrived in New Zealand. Two in ten said their health was worse.

Established refugees were asked to rate their health at five years compared to when they arrived in New Zealand (see Table 9.4). Four in ten said their health was better than when they arrived while another four in ten felt their health was about the same as when they arrived. Two in ten *established* refugees said their health was worse.

Table 9.4 Health status of established refugees compared to arrival in New Zealand

Health status compared to arrival	Refugee type	
	n	%
Much better	43	23
Somewhat better	34	18
About the same	75	40
Somewhat worse	28	15
Much worse	8	4
Total	188	100

Note

1. One did not respond.

Table 9.5 shows the health status of participants compared to when they arrived (or were last interviewed) by gender. Of the *recently arrived* refugees interviewed at six months, 49 percent of males thought their health had improved compared to 39 percent of females. Twenty-four percent of female participants thought their health was worse compared to 9 percent of males. At two years, a similar proportion of females and males thought their health had improved since they were last interviewed (37 and 38 percent respectively), although again a higher proportion of females (20 percent) than males (7 percent) thought their health was worse.

Of the *established* refugees, 46 percent of males said their health was better than at arrival compared to 35 percent of females. Twenty-three percent of females felt their health was worse, compared to 16 percent of males. Guerin et al (2003) discuss that factors such as limited access to appropriate physical activity, a change in diet and the responsibility of caring for often large families can lead to a number of health issues for women refugees in New Zealand.

Table 9.5 Health status of participants compared to arrival in New Zealand (or last interview) by gender

Health status	Refugee type					
	<i>Recently arrived</i>				<i>Established</i> (compared to arrival)	
	6 months (compared to arrival)		2 years (compared to last interview)			
	Female %	Male %	Female %	Male %	Female %	Male %
Better	39	49	37	38	35	46
About the same	36	42	43	55	42	38
Worse	24	9	20	7	23	16
Total percent	100	100	100	100	100	100
Total number	99	110	76	85	88	100

Note

1. One *recently arrived* refugee at two years did not know. One *established* refugee did not respond.

9.3.2 Reasons for participants' health being better

Ninety-three individuals at six months said their health was better than when they arrived in New Zealand. Two of the main reasons *recently arrived* refugees gave for this were feeling safe and secure and having less stress in their lives (22

Of the *recently arrived* refugees interviewed at two years, 20 percent of females said their health was worse than it had been at six months, compared to 7 percent of males.

Of the *established* refugees, 23 percent of females said their health was worse than when they arrived, compared to 16 percent of males.

“My family is re-settling in a free, quiet country. There's good, healthy food. I feel secure and I have hope for a brighter future.”

Iraqi Family Reunion refugee, six months

responses each). Other reasons were access to healthcare, access to good food and water and feeling they had a future to live for.

Among *recently arrived* refugees interviewed at two years who said their health had improved many felt this improvement was often related to environmental factors. Some of the main reasons for improvement were:

“After my husband arrived I felt emotionally safer and it helps in all areas of health.”

Burmese Quota
refugee, two years

- feeling happy and more settled into life in New Zealand (23 responses);
- having safety and freedom and not living in fear (17 responses);
- access to good food and water or an improved diet (14 responses);
- family having arrived in New Zealand (13 responses);
- access to good healthcare services (13 responses); and
- good climate in New Zealand or having adjusted to the climate (12 responses).

Other reasons participants interviewed at two years gave for improvements in their health included taking part in work, study or exercise (8 responses), receiving necessary medical treatment (8 responses), and having a better and easier life (7 responses).

“Because now my English has become better and I have friends and I go for a course. I feel relaxed and don’t think too much and feel lonely.”

Iranian Quota refugee, two years

“I’ve settled down in a quiet country where I can express my personal views with freedom. I feel secure. I am working and making good money.”

Iraqi Quota
refugee, five years

Seventy-seven *established* refugees said their health had improved. The most common reasons were access to healthcare services and medical support (43 responses), feeling safe or living in peace in a democratic country and no longer feeling they were refugees (35 responses). Another reason given was having less stress in their lives (15 responses).

“As we arrived at Auckland International Airport, I had a miscarriage and was immediately taken to Middlemore Hospital, and was cared for properly. I have received first class health treatment.”

Somali Quota refugee, five years

Other reasons *established* refugees often gave for improved health included a better diet (26 responses), living in a clean and green environment (18 responses), being with their family (13 responses), having better living standards (10 responses) and a better life for themselves and their family (10 responses).

9.3.3 Reasons for participants’ health being worse

“I have problems. My daughter is in Kenya and I am worried about her. I worry about housing issue too. I have a health condition.”

Somali Quota
refugee, two years

Common reasons the 34 *recently arrived* refugees interviewed at six months gave for their health being worse included having developed a health condition in New Zealand such as asthma (10 responses), concern about family overseas (9 responses) and emotional stress (9 responses). Three people said their health was worse because they were unhappy with their new life.

The 21 *recently arrived* refugees who said their health was worse at two years gave similar reasons. Fifteen individuals said they had developed a health

condition in New Zealand or had a pre-existing physical condition that was causing them problems, six people said they were worried about family overseas and four people said they were emotionally unwell. Five people said their health was worse because of their financial position or because they were not able to find work. Three people said their health was worse because of poor housing or the neighbourhood they lived in.

“I’m depressed emotionally, feeling nervous and under pressure. War in Iraq - I feel grieved about my family there. I’m under big pressure, I feel sad and I can’t do anything, only wait for news from them.”

Iraqi Family Reunion refugee, two years

The most common response that the 36 *established* refugees gave for their health being worse was developing a medical condition (21 responses) and missing family members overseas (18 responses). A number of people who said they had developed a medical condition cited asthma or allergies. Five *established* refugees said their health was worse because they could not find work and three mentioned cold weather.

“I didn’t have any sickness previously. Since coming to New Zealand I have severe asthma.”

Sri Lankan Quota refugee, five years

“I was too happy when I arrived because I had a better situation compared to what I had in Iran or Fiji. But after my morale came down again because of depression due to missing family and being unable to make contact with people and make friends with them - and that also includes finding a job because when they don’t want to make contact with me, how can I expect them to offer me a good job.”

Iranian Quota refugee, five years

As discussed above, a number of participants said their health had worsened due to developing asthma or allergies. A recent report by the World Health Organisation (Beasley et al., 2004) found New Zealanders suffered asthma at three times the global rate and reported that there was a marked increase in the asthma prevalence, within one generation, in people migrating to New Zealand from South East Asia and the Pacific.

9.4 HEALTH PROBLEMS OR DISABILITIES

New Zealand has a *Medical/Disabled* category for Quota refugees who either have a medical condition that can not be treated in the country of refuge and can be treated or helped in New Zealand or a disability that requires support. This means that a certain number of refugees will be accepted for resettlement with a medical condition or disability.

Twenty-five percent of *recently arrived* refugees interviewed at six months said they had a health problem, disability or condition that had lasted for more than six months (see Table 9.6). The proportion was similar for Quota and Family Reunion refugees (27 and 25 percent respectively), whereas a slightly lower proportion of Convention refugees said they had health problems (19 percent). Participants specified a range of problems including emotional problems (6 responses), back and/or chest pain (6 responses), diabetes (6 responses), vision problems (6 responses) and a heart condition (5 responses).

At two years, twenty percent of participants said they had a health problem or disability that had lasted for six months or more. The proportion with a health problem ranged from 14 percent of Quota refugees to 30 percent of Family Reunion refugees. Participants at two years were asked how long they had experienced the problem. Of the 33 who had experienced problems, 23 had had the problem before coming to New Zealand while ten individuals had developed the problem in New Zealand. The 33 individuals were suffering from a range of conditions including heart problems (6 responses), stress or depression (6 responses) and back or spine problems (5 responses).

Table 9.6 Whether *recently arrived* refugees had a health problem or disability that had lasted for six months or more

Health problem or disability	Refugee type							
	Quota		Convention		Family Reunion		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
6 months								
Yes	26	27	8	19	18	25	52	25
No	70	73	34	81	53	75	157	75
Total	96	100	42	100	71	100	209	100
2 years								
Yes	11	14	6	19	16	30	33	20
No	66	86	26	81	37	70	129	80
Total	77	100	32	100	53	100	162	100

Sixty-six *established* refugees (35 percent) said they had a health problem or disability that had lasted for six months or more. They described a range of conditions and many had multiple conditions or disabilities. Some of these included back pain (10 responses), diabetes (8 responses), high blood pressure (8 responses), stomach ulcers or gastric problems (6 responses) asthma (4 responses) and anaemia (3 responses). Seven participants referred to emotional problems or depression and five referred to headaches and migraines. Thirty-seven of these individuals had experienced the problem for more than five years, while 27 individuals had experienced the problem for four years or less.

Table 9.7 shows how those participants who suffered from a health problem or disability were hindered in various activities. The main areas *recently arrived* refugees were hindered were with working, daily activities and ‘other’ activities. A smaller number of *recently arrived* refugees said their condition or disability stopped them communicating and socialising. One third of participants with a health problem or disability interviewed at six months and 15 percent at two years said they were not limited by their conditions.

Established refugees who had suffered from a condition or disability for more than six months were often not able to work (55 percent), to carry out everyday activities (44 percent) or to carry out ‘other’ activities (32 percent). Twenty-one percent said their condition or disability did not stop them doing these activities.

Table 9.7 What participants were not able to do because of health problem or disability

What participants were not able to do because of health problem	Refugee type					
	Recently arrived				Established	
	6 months		2 years		n	%
	n	%	n	%		
Working	24	48	22	67	36	55
Everyday activities	22	44	20	61	29	44
Communicating and socialising	4	8	2	6	8	12
Other activities	15	30	9	27	21	32
None of these	16	32	5	15	14	21
Total participants	50		33		66	

Note

1. Two *recently arrived* refugees at six months did not know.
2. Participants could give multiple responses so columns do not add to 100 percent.

9.5 EMOTIONAL PROBLEMS

Refugees may experience a range of stressful events that can lead to adverse health outcomes. Clinical research has revealed a high prevalence of post-traumatic stress and depression symptoms (Hollifield et al., 2002). Furthermore, studies of resettled refugees suggest that around one in four will have been subjected to torture or severe psychological violation prior to arrival in their new country (Iredale et al., 1996). A 1999 study in New Zealand found that 20 percent of those refugees passing through Mangere Refugee Reception Centre (Mangere) had suffered significant to severe physical abuse. About 14 percent reported significant psychological symptoms and about 7 percent were diagnosed as having post-traumatic stress disorder.³⁹ An in-depth study of the health of Bosnian refugees in New Zealand found that some reported symptoms such as irritability, anger, fear for their safety and difficulty sleeping (Madjar and Humpage, 2000, p.31). According to this study, the experience of being driven from their homes and the trauma that followed were never far from the refugees' thoughts.

A number of service providers who took part in focus groups discussed mental health issues and felt this was an area of serious concern. These providers felt that not being able to find work and concern about family overseas contributed to refugees' mental health problems. Wellington providers had noticed an increase in recent years in needing emergency psychiatric teams to work with refugees. This raises issues for medical professionals responding to refugees' emotional health needs in their own languages. It is difficult to address emotional and mental health issues through an interpreter.

Research participants were asked about emotional problems they had experienced. The question was framed as such: 'Many refugees experience emotional problems as a result of past experiences and moving to and settling in a new country. Have you experienced any of these types of problems since coming to New Zealand?' A caveat with regard to this question relates to

³⁹ Footnote 52 in Reeve, M. (1997). *Refugee Health: An Assessment of the Medical Screening Programme at the Mangere Refugee Resettlement Centre.*

participants' interpretation and understanding of 'emotional problems'. For example, Guerin et al. (2004) point out that most Somali view 'mental illness' as encompassing the most severe and possibly untreatable problems. Elmi (1999) cited in Guerin et al. (2004) found that depression and concepts of stress are not recognised in traditional Somali healthcare.

One third of recently arrived refugees interviewed at six months said they had experienced emotional problems since coming to New Zealand. At two years, 12 percent of participants said they had experienced emotional problems in the last 12 months.

Of the *recently arrived* refugees interviewed at six months, just over one third indicated they had experienced emotional problems since arriving in New Zealand (see Table 9.8). A higher proportion of Convention refugees (52 percent) said they had experienced emotional problems than Quota refugees or Family Reunion refugees (31 and 34 percent respectively).

At two years, 12 percent of *recently arrived* refugees said they had experienced emotional problems in the previous 12 months. The proportion experiencing emotional problems was similar for all refugee groups, but overall the proportion with emotional problems had declined. Participants at two years were asked if these problems became worse over time. Of the 18 individuals who responded to this question, 13 individuals said these problems had become worse over time.⁴⁰

Table 9.8 Whether recently arrived refugees had experienced emotional problems

Experienced emotional problems	Refugee type							
	Quota		Convention		Family Reunion		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
6 months (since arrival)								
Yes	30	31	22	52	24	34	76	36
No	66	69	20	48	47	66	133	64
Total	96	100	42	100	71	100	209	100
2 years (in previous 12 months)								
Yes	11	14	4	13	5	9	20	12
No	65	86	28	88	48	91	141	88
Total	76	100	32	100	53	100	161	100

Note

1. At two years, one did not know.

Thirty percent of *established* refugees (55 individuals) said they had experienced emotional problems since coming to New Zealand, as a result of past experiences and moving to and settling into a new country.⁴¹ Half of those who had experienced emotional problems (27 individuals) said the problems had become worse over time.

9.5.1 Whether help was sought for emotional problems

It is important that emotional problems are addressed if they arise, or at least there are services available from which refugees could seek help. Table 9.9

⁴⁰ Two *recently arrived* refugees at two years did not know if their emotional problems had become worse over time.

⁴¹ Two *established* refugees did not know if they had experienced emotional problems.

shows whether participants who had experienced emotional problems sought help. Seventy-six individuals said they had experienced emotional problems at six months and 31 of these people sought help.

At two years, 20 individuals had experienced emotional problems and 11 of them sought help. Participants at two years were asked from who they got this help. The main source was a counsellor (6 responses) or a GP (4 responses). A small number of individuals said they sought help from a church, friend or specialist. Most participants said this help was useful, with only one person saying the help they received was not useful.

Of the *established* refugees, half of the 54 individuals who had experienced emotional problems had sought help. Help was mainly solicited from medical professionals, including a family doctor (12 responses), psychiatrist (9 responses) or specialist (4 responses). A few people said they sought help from friends, family or community members, the Refugee and Migrant Service (RMS), or someone at school. Of those who received help, 20 said this help was useful while seven individuals said the help they received was not useful.

Table 9.9 Whether participants sought help for emotional problems

Whether sought help	Refugee type		
	<i>Recently arrived</i>		<i>Established</i>
	6 months	2 years	
	n	n	n
Yes	31	11	28
No	45	9	26
Total number	76	20	54

Note

1. Of the *established* refugees, one did not know.

A number of participants who said they had experienced emotional problems in New Zealand were still experiencing these problems when they were interviewed. Of the *recently arrived* refugees at two years, 16 out of 20 individuals were still experiencing problems. Of the *established* refugees, 33 out of 55 individuals were still experiencing problems when they were interviewed.

9.6 ACCESS TO A GP

Accessing different health services is an important part of re-establishment and ensuring the support of health professionals. Refugees come to New Zealand with a number of health needs and may require comprehensive care on arrival. Some may have been living with conditions where they were not able to access adequate healthcare for a considerable number of years.

The first point of contact with the health sector will often be a GP or family doctor. *Recently arrived* refugees interviewed at six months were asked if they had registered with a GP in New Zealand. Most participants (all apart from three Convention refugees and four Family Reunion refugees) said they had registered with a GP in New Zealand. Quota refugees generally found their GP through the RMS or through family members in New Zealand. Convention refugees chose their GP based on proximity and through friends, while Family Reunion refugees generally found their GP through family. A number of Family Reunion and

Convention refugees said they chose their GP because they spoke the same language as themselves, indicating that their doctor was also from their culture.

All apart from four *established* refugees said they were registered with a GP.⁴² These individuals often chose a particular GP because:

- a kind, helpful, friendly, and good attitude (71 responses);
- proximity to participant's house (64 responses);
- referral from friends or family (56 responses); and
- language was not a problem or an interpreter was provided (56 responses).

Other reasons given by *established* refugees for choosing a particular GP included provision of a good service (29 responses), being reasonably priced or free (27 responses) and being available when needed (24 responses).

9.6.1 Whether recently arrived refugees had visited a GP

Table 9.10 shows the proportion of *recently arrived* refugees who had visited a GP or family doctor in New Zealand. Similar proportions from all refugee groups had been to a GP. At six months, 83 percent of participants had visited a GP in New Zealand (ranging from 80 percent of Quota refugees to 89 percent of Family Reunion refugees). At two years, 72 percent of participants had seen a GP in the past 12 months (ranging from 66 percent of Convention refugees to 79 percent of Family Reunion refugees).

At six months, 55 percent had seen a doctor between one and five times since arriving in New Zealand, 25 percent had seen a doctor between six and 11 times and 20 percent had seen a doctor 12 or more times. Convention refugees had been to see a GP more often on average than other refugee groups, although this could be accounted for by Convention refugees having been in New Zealand for longer than other participants. Sixty-three percent of Convention refugees had seen a doctor six or more times compared to 29 percent of Quota refugees and 55 percent of Family Reunion refugees.

At two years, *recently arrived* refugees were asked whether they had seen a doctor in the last 12 months. Sixty-three percent of participants had seen a doctor between one and five times, 21 percent had seen a doctor between six and 11 times and 16 percent had seen a doctor 12 or more times. Family Reunion refugees had seen a doctor more often than other participants. Fifty-three percent of Family Reunion refugees had seen a doctor six or more times compared to 26 percent of Quota refugees and 35 percent of Convention refugees.

⁴² One *established* refugee did not respond to this question.

Table 9.10 Whether *recently arrived* refugees had visited a GP about their own health and the number of visits

Visited a GP	Refugee type							
	Quota		Convention		Family Reunion		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
6 months (since arrival)								
Yes	77	80	34	81	63	89	174	83
No	19	20	8	19	8	11	35	17
Total	96	100	42	100	71	100	209	100
2 years (in past 12 months)								
Yes	54	70	21	66	42	79	117	72
No	23	30	11	34	11	21	45	28
Total	77	100	32	100	53	100	162	100
Number of times visited a GP								
6 months (since arrival)								
1 to 5	54	70	12	36	28	45	94	55
6 to 11	18	23	12	36	13	21	43	25
12 or more	5	6	9	27	21	34	35	20
Total	77	100	33	100	62	100	172	100
2 years (in past 12 months)								
1 to 5	40	74	13	65	20	48	73	63
6 to 11	9	17	3	15	12	29	24	21
12 or more	5	9	4	20	10	24	19	16
Total	54	100	20	100	42	100	116	100

Note

1. At six months, two did not know the number of times they had visited a GP. At two years, one did not know.

9.6.2 Whether *established* refugees had visited a GP

Eighty-three percent of *established* refugees (156 individuals) said they had visited a GP in the last year about their own health.⁴³ Table 9.11 shows the number of times these individuals had visited a GP in the past 12 months. Sixty-four percent had visited a GP between one and five times, 19 percent between six and 11 times and 18 percent 12 or more times.

⁴³ One *established* refugee did not respond to this question.

Table 9.11 How often *established* refugees had visited a GP in the past 12 months

Number of times visited a GP	Total	
	n	%
1 to 5	98	64
6 to 11	29	19
12 or more	27	18
Total	154	100

Note

- Two did not know.

“They are friendly and generally treated me very well, but there are language problems.”

Somali Quota refugee, six months

9.6.3 Care and service received from the GP

Research participants who had visited a GP were asked to describe the care and service they had received. At six months, most participants were satisfied with their GP, and said their GP provided a good service and was kind and approachable. Other reasons commonly given for being satisfied included having access to an interpreter and receiving appropriate treatment. Some individuals commented on problems communicating with their GP due to a lack of English. A few said they needed to take a family member or friend to interpret when they visited a GP.

A small number of *recently arrived* refugees interviewed at six months were not satisfied with some aspects of their GP’s service. This mainly related to them feeling they were not given suitable treatment or medicine. A few individuals said they found it expensive to visit a GP.

“The healthcare is very good. I don’t need help with the language because the doctor that I go to is Iraqi.”

Iraqi Family Reunion refugee two years

At two years, many participants were satisfied with the service they received from their GP. Participants often said the service they received was good, the GP was welcoming and approachable, and there were no language problems or an interpreter was provided. Twelve people said they found it affordable to visit their GP. A few people discussed aspects of their GP’s service with which they were not satisfied. The main issues raised included waiting times for appointments, the costs involved, language problems, and not being satisfied with the treatment provided.

Established refugees’ comments about the service they received from their GP were generally positive with most people commenting the service was good or very good. As with *recently arrived* refugees, *established* refugees said the GPs they had visited were friendly, approachable, caring and provided interpreters. A small number were not satisfied with the service they received or the cost involved.

9.6.4 Problems accessing a doctor

A number of participants said there had been a time when they needed to see a doctor but did not get to see one (see Table 9.12). Of the *recently arrived* refugees interviewed at six months, 12 percent said they were not able to see a doctor when they needed to. The main reasons they gave were the cost involved (11 responses), not being able to get an appointment (8 responses) and communication problems (7 responses).

“I wasn’t quite sure how to [get an appointment], my English is not good and I feared I couldn’t communicate.”

Iraqi Quota refugee, six months

At two years, 4 percent of participants had not been able to see a doctor when they needed to at some time in the past 12 months. The main reasons were cost, difficulty finding an interpreter, not being able to get an appointment in time, and not knowing how the system worked.

Sixteen percent of *established* refugees said they had not been able to see a GP when they needed to. A common reason was the cost of visiting a GP (11 responses). Other reasons related to appointments not being available when needed (8 responses) and long waiting lists (5 responses).

Table 9.12 Whether participants needed to see a doctor but did not get to see one

Whether needed to see a GP but did not get to see one	Refugee type		
	<i>Recently arrived</i>		<i>Established</i> (since arrival)
	6 months (since arrival)	2 years (in past 12 months)	
	%	%	%
Yes	12	4	16
No	88	96	84
Total percent	100	100	100
Total number	209	162	187

Note

1. Two *established* refugees did not respond.

A number of service providers who took part in focus groups felt refugees often had problems accessing healthcare services (including GPs and hospitals). Some of the difficulties identified were, transport difficulties (especially in Auckland), lack of interpreters, problems getting referrals to specialists, long waiting lists and the cost of services. Providers in Wellington specifically mentioned long waiting lists for mental health services.

9.7 USE OF OTHER HEALTHCARE SERVICES

Table 9.13 shows the proportion of *recently arrived* refugees who had seen a healthcare worker or specialist (apart from a GP). At six months, four in ten participants had seen a healthcare worker or specialist since arriving in New Zealand. Thirty-three percent of Convention refugees had seen a healthcare worker or specialist compared to 41 percent of Quota and Family Reunion refugees. At two years, three in ten *recently arrived* refugees had seen a healthcare worker or specialist in the last 12 months.

“Cost is a factor ...it can be very expensive. Including bus fares, medication, and the appointment, it can be a lot of money ...Cost can be unbelievable even if they have a job.”

Service provider, focus group

Table 9.13 Whether *recently arrived* refugees had seen other healthcare workers or specialists

Visited other healthcare worker or specialist	Refugee type							
	Quota		Convention		Family Reunion		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
6 months (since arrival)								
Yes	39	41	13	33	28	41	80	39
No	57	59	27	68	41	59	125	61
Total	96	100	40	100	69	100	205	100
2 years (in past 12 months)								
Yes	21	28	9	28	16	30	46	29
No	55	72	23	72	37	70	115	71
Total	76	100	32	100	53	100	161	100

Note

1. At six months, one did not know and three did not respond. At two years, one did not know.

Just under half of *established* refugees (89 individuals) said they had visited a healthcare worker apart from a GP since arriving in New Zealand.

9.8 USE OF HOSPITALS

Table 9.14 shows the proportion of *recently arrived* refugees who had used a service at, or been admitted to, a public hospital. At six months, 28 percent had been to hospital. A smaller proportion of Convention refugees (17 percent) than Quota refugees (30 percent) or Family Reunion refugees (32 percent) had used services at a hospital. At two years, 22 percent of refugees had used a service or been admitted to hospital in the last 12 months (ranging from 6 percent of Convention refugees to 26 percent of Quota refugees). The smaller proportion who had used a hospital at two years could be accounted for by better access to GPs as well as a reduction in long term medical problems.

Table 9.14 Whether *recently arrived* refugees had used services at, or been admitted to, a public hospital

Been admitted to or used hospital services	Refugee type							
	Quota		Convention		Family Reunion		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
6 months (since arrival)								
Yes	29	30	7	17	23	32	59	28
No	67	70	35	83	48	68	150	72
Total	96	100	42	100	71	100	209	100
2 years (in past 12 months)								
Yes	20	26	2	6	13	25	35	22
No	56	74	30	94	40	75	126	78
Total	76	100	32	100	53	100	161	100

Note: At two years, one did not know.

Just over half of *established* refugees (100 individuals) had used services at, or been admitted to, a public hospital since arriving in New Zealand.

Overall, participants showed a high number of hospital visits compared to what would be expected of the general population. Some refugees may not be used to the concept of a GP, especially those who come from countries where health systems are not highly developed and where healthcare is sought directly from public hospitals where most doctors are located. Furthermore, although the community services card that refugees are entitled allows them a maximum subsidy for GP visits, hospital visits are free. Refugees, similar to others on a low income, may choose to wait until their condition is serious enough that hospital treatment is necessary.

9.8.1 Care and service received at public hospitals

Research participants who had used a service at, or been admitted to, a public hospital were asked to describe the service they received. Fifty-nine *recently arrived* refugees interviewed at six months said they had visited a hospital since arriving in New Zealand and most of these individuals said they received an appropriate, good or excellent service. A number of people said that an interpreter was provided at the hospital. The main issue for a small number of individuals who felt they did not receive a good service was a long waiting list or waiting time at the hospital. A few people discussed communication problems, bad attitudes from workers and a lack of medication prescribed (1 response each).

At two years, 35 participants had visited a hospital in the last 12 months. The majority of these individuals said they received a good service and appropriate treatment. Only three individuals raised concerns about the service they received, including the type of treatment, needing an interpreter and unfriendly staff.

“Doctors are quite sensitive regarding cultural issues and try to circumvent problems as much as possible.”

Iraqi Quota refugee, five years

One hundred *established* refugees had visited or received services at a public hospital since arriving in New Zealand. These individuals had a range of comments about the service they received. Most *established* refugees said the service provided was good or very good and the staff were kind and helpful. Nine individuals said the service was wonderful or excellent and a further 11 people noted that the service was culturally sensitive.

“Excellent and I didn't feel like I was a refugee, because they took good care of me.”

Iranian Quota refugee, five years

A number of *established* refugees were not satisfied with some aspects of the service provided at hospitals with the main complaint being long waiting lists or waiting times (23 responses).

“Poor because I waited at the emergency department too long while I was in pain.”

Somali Quota refugee, five years

Six individuals said they had problems with language or needed an interpreter at the hospital and another five people did not agree with the medication they were prescribed. Two people felt the service they received was not culturally appropriate.

9.8.2 Interpreters at hospital

Most participants were aware of their entitlement to an interpreter at hospital.

The *recently arrived* refugees interviewed at two years and *established* refugees who had been to hospital were asked if they were aware of their entitlement to an interpreter and whether they had used one. At two years, 35 participants had been to hospital in the last 12 months and 32 of these individuals were aware of their entitlement to an interpreter. Of the 104 *established* refugees who responded to this question, 97 people knew they were entitled to an interpreter.

Table 9.15 shows the number of participants who had used an interpreter at a public hospital. At two years, 23 out of 35 participants who had visited a hospital had used an interpreter. Most of them said the service provided by the interpreter was very good or excellent, with only one person saying the service was fair.

Of the *established* refugees, 48 out of 104 participants had used an interpreter. Thirty-four participants said they received an excellent or very good service from the interpreter and 12 people said they received a good service. Three people said the service they received was fair or poor.

Table 9.15 Whether participants had used an interpreter at hospital

Used an interpreter	Refugee type	
	<i>Recently arrived (2 years)</i>	<i>Established</i>
	n	n
Yes	23	48
No	12	56
Total number	35	104

9.9 OVERALL IMPRESSIONS OF HEALTHCARE IN NEW ZEALAND

Recently arrived refugees interviewed at two years and *established* refugees were asked to describe overall the healthcare they had received in New Zealand. At two years, many participants were satisfied with their healthcare. They discussed aspects of their healthcare in New Zealand they were satisfied with and some of the areas highlighted were:

- a good, very good or excellent service (126 responses);
- caring and kind staff (56 responses);
- low prescription costs (22 responses);
- full medical check-ups provided (12 responses); and
- good follow-ups (10 responses).

Some participants at two years discussed aspects of their healthcare they were not satisfied with, which were:

- long waiting times for treatment or appointments (24 responses); and
- dissatisfaction with treatment (11 responses).

A number of *established* refugees indicated they were satisfied with the healthcare they had received in New Zealand, noting a good or excellent service (114 responses) and caring and approachable staff (19 responses). The main issue for those who were not satisfied was long waiting lists and long waiting times for treatment (7 responses). One person was dissatisfied due to a bad operation and one person did not agree with the medication they were prescribed.

“I can say the healthcare that I have received since I arrived in New Zealand is a very outstanding service and that health service has made my life and my condition more settled and satisfactory.”

Somali Quota refugee, five years

9.9.1 Findings from focus groups

A number of participants in focus groups discussed their impressions of the healthcare they had received in New Zealand. A group of Burmese refugees were generally very satisfied with their healthcare, especially once they had a good understanding of how the health system worked. They were especially impressed with healthcare for children and that children under five years received a free service. A group of Somali women also said they were very happy with the healthcare they had received in New Zealand.

A group of Iranian women expressed dissatisfaction with the healthcare they had received. Some of the problems included difficulties accessing specialist care and the travel and expense involved with visiting a doctor.

An issue that arose in the interviews with *recently arrived* and *established* refugees was that some participants were not satisfied with the medicine they were prescribed by doctors in New Zealand. A focus group with the research associates provided some context to this issue. The research associates said that many refugees were used to being able to get some medicines without

“It takes a long time to get medical treatment for an uncommon disease ... patient has to suffer unnecessarily due to the long duration of waiting time for consultation.”

Sri Lankan Convention refugee, two years

“There is good service, and it’s available during emergency. The hospitals are clean and tidy. Staff are friendly. Rich and poor have equal access to the same treatment.”

Sri Lankan Quota refugee, five years

“Some of these people have come under a medical category, so they believe they will be treated for their problem as soon as they arrive in the country. That turns into a resettlement trauma. It’s just another loss for them.”

Service provider, focus group

prescription (such as antibiotics), or telling the doctor what medicine they require rather than taking the doctor’s advice. The research associates thought that refugees often felt that ‘more medicine is better’ and believed they did not get enough or a strong enough dose in New Zealand.

An issue brought up by a number of service providers was that refugees with medical conditions had expectations about what they would be treated for once in New Zealand (especially those who came through the medical category). The service providers mentioned that some refugees had not realised that some conditions were not treatable or that there were long waiting lists for treatment in New Zealand.

9.10 CHILDREN’S HEALTH

Eisenbruch (1986) noted a high prevalence of chronic illness among refugee children, as well as emotional problems. The current research does not go into detail about the health of refugee children. Parents of children aged up to 17 years of age were asked about their children’s health. The aim of these questions was to get a general idea of children’s health rather than specific details.

Of the *recently arrived* refugees interviewed at six months, 70 individuals responded to the questions about their children. At two years, 61 individuals responded. Seventy-eight *established* refugees with children responded.

9.10.1 Children’s health in general

Research participants were asked to rate their children’s health on a scale from excellent to poor (see Table 9.16). Of the *recently arrived* refugees interviewed at six months, just over one third (36 percent) of participants said their children’s health was excellent and a further third said their children’s health was very good. One quarter said their children’s health was good, while 7 percent said it was fair or poor. At two years, 83 percent of participants said their children’s health was excellent or very good and 17 percent said their children’s health was good. No participants at two years said their children’s health was fair or poor.

Of the *established* refugees, nearly three quarters (73 percent) said their children’s health was excellent or very good, 21 percent said their children’s health was good and 7 percent said their children’s health was fair or poor.

Table 9.16 Health of participants’ children

Children’s health	Refugee type					
	Recently arrived				Established	
	6 months		2 years		n	%
n	%	n	%			
Excellent	24	36	22	37	21	34
Very good	22	33	27	46	24	39
Good	16	24	10	17	13	21
Fair	4	6	0	0	3	5
Poor	1	1	0	0	1	2
Total	67	100	59	100	62	100

Note

1. At two years, two *recently arrived* refugees did not know. Of the *established* refugees, 13 did not respond. Three recently arrived refugees interviewed at six months gave mixed responses and are not included.

Participants were asked to rate their children’s health compared to when they first arrived in New Zealand (or when they were last interviewed). Of the *recently arrived* refugees interviewed at six months, 50 percent of parents thought their children’s health was better than when they arrived in New Zealand, 38 percent thought their children’s health was about the same, and 13 percent thought their children’s health was worse (see Table 9.17). At two years, half of parents thought their children’s health was better than at six months and a similar proportion thought their children’s health was about the same. Three percent said their children’s health was worse than at six months.

Two thirds of *established* refugees thought their children’s health was better than when they arrived in New Zealand. Twenty-eight percent said their children’s health was about the same, while 7 percent said their health was worse.

At six months, half of participants said their children’s health was better than when they arrived in New Zealand and 13 percent said their children’s health was worse.

Table 9.17 Children’s health compared to arrival or last interview

Children’s health	Refugee type					
	Recently arrived				Established (compared to arrival)	
	6 months (compared to arrival)		2 years (compared to last interview)		n	%
n	%	n	%			
Much better	18	30	15	26	23	40
Somewhat better	12	20	14	24	14	25
About the same	23	38	27	47	16	28
Somewhat worse	8	13	2	3	4	7
Much worse	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	61	100	58	100	57	100

Note

1. Of the *recently arrived* refugees interviewed at six months and the *established* refugees, three participants gave mixed responses to this question and were not included in this analysis. They both said one child’s health was better and one child’s health was worse.
2. At six months, six *recently arrived* refugees did not respond. At two years, one did not know and two did not respond. Eighteen *established* refugees did not respond.

9.10.2 Reasons for children’s health being better or worse

Research participants who said their children’s health was better or worse than when they arrived in New Zealand (or when they were last interviewed) were asked reasons for this.

Similar reasons for improvement in children’s health emerged at each interview. They were a better diet and access to clean water and good healthcare. Other reasons related to a better (or cleaner) environment, children being happier and children being able to go to school.

“New Zealand is cleaner and it is easier to get healthcare. Our food is much better.”

“My daughter is regularly taking part in her netball and school and gets dental healthcare from school. My son has been checked regularly from the time he was born.”

Iranian Quota refugee, two years

Iranian Family Reunion refugee, two years

“Because they are living in a peaceful country, going to school, they are not scared of war. Good weather and food also keep them healthy.”

Afghan Family Reunion refugee, two years

Table 9.18 Reasons for children’s health being better

Refugee type		
Recently arrived		Established
6 months	2 years	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Better diet (18) ▪ Access to healthcare (16) ▪ Good environment (10) ▪ Children happier (11) ▪ Attending school (8) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Good diet (10) ▪ Access to healthcare (10) ▪ Attending school (9) ▪ Children happier (8) ▪ Used to new country (7) ▪ Living in a safe and peaceful country (6) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Access to healthcare or receiving necessary medical attention (21) ▪ Better diet or access to clean water (21) ▪ Attending school (9) ▪ Cleaner environment (8) ▪ Better lifestyle (8)

Note:

1. Participants could give multiple responses.

“Feeling safe and free. Good environment, better healthcare, and better feeding. The nature, weather in New Zealand is very nice and clean, healthy.”

Iraqi Quota refugee, five years

“They have a peaceful life. They are well looked after by healthcare services. We have a healthy diet.”

Vietnamese Quota refugee, five years

Eight *recently arrived* refugees at six months said their children’s health was worse than when they arrived in New Zealand. The main reasons given for this were the children having developed a medical condition (5 responses) or the weather being worse than they were used to (4 responses). Four *established* refugees said their children’s health was worse because of their child developing a medical condition, waiting for an operation or not being treated fairly at school.

9.10.3 Use of GPs by children

“They are very careful; prompt services; they take special care of children.”

Sri Lankan Convention refugee, two years

Table 9.19 shows whether participants’ children had visited a GP. Eighty-seven percent of *recently arrived* refugees interviewed at six months indicated that their children had visited a doctor since arriving in New Zealand. At two years, a similar proportion of participants said their children had visited a GP in the last year.

Recently arrived refugees were generally satisfied with the care and service their children received with many saying the service was good or very good. A number of participants said they found their children’s doctor kind and approachable and several mentioned that an interpreter was available and the doctor was good with children. A small number were not happy with aspects of the service their children received, including communication problems and high fees.

“Excellent, friendly and respectful approach. An interpreter was organised hence no language difficulties.”

Ethiopian Quota refugee, two years

“GPs tend to prescribe similar medication at all times. I think these subsidised medications are cheaper and not effective.”

Ethiopian Quota refugee, five years

Ninety-five percent of *established* refugees said their children had visited a GP in the last year. Most of them felt their children received good care and service, and many commented that the GP was helpful, kind and approachable. Six people said the service their children received was excellent. A small number of participants discussed aspects of the service they were not satisfied with including communication problems, the high cost and doctors not prescribing the best medicine.

Table 9.19 Whether participants' children had visited a GP

Whether children had visited a GP	Refugee type					
	Recently arrived				Established (in past 12 months)	
	6 months (since arrival)		2 years (in past 12 months)			
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Yes	60	87	52	87	74	95
No	9	13	8	13	4	5
Total	69	100	60	100	78	100

Note

1. At six months and two years, one *recently arrived* refugee did not respond.

Table 9.20 shows whether participants' children had used services at, or been admitted to, a public hospital. One third of *recently arrived* refugees interviewed at six months said their children had visited a hospital since arriving in New Zealand. At two years, one third of participants said their children had been to hospital in the last year.

Most *recently arrived* refugees at six months and at two years were happy with the service their children had received at hospital. A small number indicated dissatisfaction, including one person who did not agree with the treatment provided to their child and three individuals who said they were required to wait a long time before being seen.

Nearly six in ten *established* refugees said their children had used a service at, or been admitted to, a public hospital since arriving in New Zealand. Again, comments relating to the care and service provided to their children in hospital were generally positive. However, 13 individuals commented on waiting a long time to see a doctor or long waiting lists for surgery. As discussed above, refugees may be used to using hospital services for general healthcare. The high number of hospital visits by participants' children may reflect serious medical cases, or a GP not being available or able to treat certain conditions. Or, as discussed above, refugees may be more used, or prefer, to visit hospital for medical treatment.

“After waiting for a long time I was told to take my child to the after hours doctor. They told me it would take even longer, but I think they felt sorry for us because my child was just a baby.”

Iraqi Quota refugee, five years

Table 9.20 Whether participants' children had visited a public hospital

Children visited hospital	Refugee type					
	Recently arrived				Established (since arrival)	
	6 months (since arrival)		2 years (in past 12 months)			
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Yes	22	33	20	33	46	59
No	45	67	41	67	32	41
Total	67	100	61	100	78	100

Note: At six months, three *recently arrived* refugees did not respond.

9.10.4 Whether children had been immunised

Recently arrived refugees at two years and *established* refugees were asked if any of their children had been immunised since arriving in New Zealand. As is shown in Table 9.21, most participants had arranged for their children to be

immunised. Eighty-eight percent of *recently arrived* refugees had immunised their children as had 95 percent of *established* refugees.

Table 9.21 Whether any of participants' children had been immunised since arriving in New Zealand

Children been immunised	Refugee type			
	<i>Recently arrived (2 years)</i>		<i>Established</i>	
	n	%	n	%
Yes	52	88	69	95
No	7	12	4	5
Total	59	100	73	100

Note

1. Of the *recently arrived* refugees at two years, two did not know.

9.10.5 Overall impressions of children's healthcare in New Zealand

Recently arrived refugees at two years and *established* refugees were asked to describe the overall healthcare their children had received in New Zealand. At two years, parents were generally happy with the care their children had received. Positive comments focussed on the service being good or very good (41 responses), kind and helpful health workers (27 responses), no language problems (23 responses), children being provided with full check-ups (9 responses) and vaccinations provided (6 responses).

The only problem participants at two years noted about the health service for their children related to waiting time (9 responses). However, an equal number of participants said they did not have to wait.

When asked about overall healthcare for their children, most *established* refugees felt the services provided were good or excellent. Positive comments included helpful, caring and approachable staff (26 responses), immunisation available (8 responses), interpreters provided (8 responses) and a prompt service (5 responses).

As with *recently arrived* refugees, the main issue *established* refugees had with health services for their children related to waiting times. Two people said they had experienced communication problems.

9.11 SUMMARY

Recently arrived refugees rated their health similarly at both interviews. Forty-five percent at six months and 50 percent at two years rated their health as very good or excellent, 33 percent at both interviews said their health was good and 22 percent at six months and 17 percent at two years said their health was fair or poor. Convention and Family Reunion rated their health better at two years than at six months while a slightly smaller proportion of Quota refugees at two years than at six months rated their health as excellent or very good. Forty-five percent of *established* refugees rated their health as very good or excellent, 29 percent said their health was good and 25 percent said their health was fair or poor. Around one quarter of *recently arrived* refugees interviewed at six months and 35 percent of *established* refugees had a health condition or disability that had

“At Mangere they checked all. I regularly go to my GP to get immunisation for my son. They are good. Public Health nurse comes to visit my house with interpreter. She is very nice. Good healthcare system for children here.”

Burmese Quota refugee, two years

“Always there is service, but very slow and language difficulties for most immigrants who do not speak English.”

Somali Quota refugee, five years

lasted for six months or more. Often this hindered participants' ability to work or take part in everyday activities.

Most participants felt their health was better or about the same as when they arrived in New Zealand. Reasons commonly given for improved health were feeling safe and secure and dealing with less stress and having access to healthcare in New Zealand. Sixteen percent of *recently arrived* refugees interviewed at six months and 19 percent of *established* refugees felt their health was worse than when they arrived in New Zealand. Often this was due to developing a medical condition in New Zealand (often asthma or allergies) or concern about family overseas. Female participants were more likely than males to say health was worse than when they arrived (or when they were last interviewed).

Thirty-six percent of *recently arrived* refugees interviewed at six months said they had experienced emotional problems. More Convention refugees said they experienced these problems, perhaps because of the stress associated with having their claims determined. The proportion experiencing emotional problems at two years decreased to 12 percent. Thirty percent of *established* refugees said they had experienced emotional problems in New Zealand. A number of participants said their emotional problems became worse over time.

Most participants had visited a GP in New Zealand. Eighty-three percent of *recently arrived* refugees interviewed at six months had visited a doctor since arrival and the same proportion of *established* refugees had visited a GP in the past 12 months. Twelve percent of *recently arrived* refugees interviewed at six months and 16 percent of *established* refugees said there was a time they needed to see a doctor but did not, often because of the cost involved.

Participants had high use of other healthcare workers (including specialists) and hospital services. Around 40 percent of *recently arrived* refugees at six months and 50 percent of *established* refugees had seen a healthcare worker apart from a GP. A number of participants had been admitted to or used services at a hospital (28 percent of *recently arrived* refugees at six months and 53 percent of *established* refugees). This could reflect a high proportion of participants with serious medical conditions requiring hospital or specialist care or it could reflect participants not being able to access a doctor and seeking attention elsewhere.

Sixty-nine percent of *recently arrived* refugees interviewed at six months and 83 percent at two years said their children's health was excellent or very good. Seventy-three percent of *established* refugees said their children's health was excellent or very good, 21 percent said their health was good and 7 percent fair or poor. Many said their children's health was better since coming to New Zealand, often due to a good diet and access to healthcare.

Overall, participants were satisfied with the healthcare that they received for themselves and their children. Many commenting that the services (including the staff) were good or excellent. Some participants were dissatisfied with the long waiting times for treatment or appointments and a few were not happy with the

treatment although this often related to the medical system being different to what they were used to, such as requiring a prescription for antibiotics.

04 TRAINING, WORK AND INCOME

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SECTION 04

This section looks at participants' experiences learning English, taking part in other study and training, accessing the labour market and their income (including government benefits).

Proficiency in English language is critical to both the economic and social aspects of resettlement and integration. English is the main language spoken in New Zealand and individuals who are not able to speak English have a difficult time communicating.

As well as learning English, refugees may have a variety of other education needs in New Zealand. Study and training are often necessary to help refugees access paid work. In some cases, refugees may have qualifications from their country of origin that are not recognised in New Zealand and they need to do further study in order for their qualifications to be recognised.

When refugees arrive in New Zealand, they have a range of needs to be met. For some, their immediate needs are dealing with the trauma they have been through, improving their English language ability, undertaking further education and/or training and accessing health services (including mental health services). Resettlement takes time and financial support assists by allowing refugees that time.

Paid work is important. It is one component of integration into a new society and a key indicator of resettlement. Work provides an income, a sense of independence, self-esteem, as well as social connections. Work may also provide an opportunity for refugees to improve their English language skills. Having a source of income can be especially important to refugees who want to help their family overseas or sponsor family members to come to New Zealand. Valtonen (1998) observed that refugees who were unemployed from the outset of resettlement, or for long periods, were at risk of becoming socially excluded from the mainstream, since the main source of regular social contact with other groups is often through the workplace.

10 ENGLISH LANGUAGE

10.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines participants' self-rated English language ability upon arrival in New Zealand and at each interview. Participants' experiences learning English in New Zealand are then described including the different ways they had learnt English and which they found most useful. Any problems participants encountered trying to learn English in New Zealand are also explored. Finally this chapter looks at participants' use of and experiences with interpreters and translators in New Zealand. The topics covered in this chapter include:

- the context around English language learning;
- ability to speak and write English compared to arrival;
- learning English;
- problems learning English in New Zealand;
- reasons for learning English; and
- interpreters and translators.

Key themes

- Over half of *recently arrived* refugees interviewed at six months said they could not speak or write English well.
- Four in ten Convention refugees said they could speak English well on arrival, compared to only 10 percent of Quota and Family Reunion refugees. At two years, three quarters of Convention refugees said they could speak English well or very well, compared to 46 percent of Family Reunion refugees and 28 percent of Quota refugees.
- Participants over the age of 40 years rated their English language ability lower than younger participants at each interview. Subsequently, they were the most likely to report needing help from interpreters and translators. A number of participants over the age of 40 years said they had learnt no English in New Zealand.
- Twelve percent of *established* refugees said they could speak English well or very well on arrival in New Zealand. After they had been in New Zealand for five years, half of *established* refugees said they could speak English well or very well.
- One quarter of *recently arrived* refugees interviewed at two years and one third of *established* refugees said the most useful way to learn English was at an educational institution such as a school, university or polytechnic.
- The main reasons *recently arrived* and *established* refugees gave for improvements in their spoken English language ability were contact with English language speakers in daily activities, through family and friends and through the media, followed by English language classes. Formal study and English language classes were important for improving written English.
- Of the *recently arrived* refugees interviewed at two years, 22 percent of women had experienced problems trying to learn English compared to 12 percent of men. Of the *established* refugees, 38 percent of women had experienced problems compared to 18 percent of men. Particular difficulties for women discussed in focus groups were problems finding appropriate childcare, a lack of transport and not being able to go out alone.

- Of the *recently arrived* refugees, 83 percent interviewed at six months and 48 percent at two years had needed help from an interpreter or translator. One third of *established* refugees had needed help from an interpreter or translator. The main areas that help was required was at Work and Income (W&I) and when accessing healthcare.
-

10.2 CONTEXT

Many studies have acknowledged that of all the factors that will assist resettlement, proficiency in English is one of the most important (Coghill and Gubbay, 1988, cited in Altinkaya and Omundsen, 1999; Fletcher, 1999; Zwart, 2000).

Refugees come to New Zealand from diverse backgrounds and have different needs when it comes to learning English. For example, a university graduate with work experience will have different requirements to someone who has lived in a small village and only attended school for five years. The diversity of refugees' backgrounds means there needs to be a range of options correctly targeted to refugees when they arrive in New Zealand.

Refugees face a number of barriers trying to learn English in New Zealand. Access to English language classes can be difficult if, for example, refugees do not have transportation or do not have appropriate childcare. Other factors that may impact on a refugee's ability to learn English include their health status and proficiency in their own language.

10.2.1 Entitlements to English language study in New Zealand

The Auckland University of Technology co-ordinates an English language programme for Quota refugees while they are at the Mangere Refugee Reception Centre (Mangere). They also provide childcare, special education support and primary and secondary classes, which prepare students for New Zealand schools. Once Quota refugees leave Mangere, they are eligible for English language training provided through Training Opportunities, provided they are registered for work with the Ministry of Social Development's Work and Income (W&I). Quota refugees are also eligible for other Crown-subsidised W&I and polytechnic courses. Refugee children of school age are provided with ESOL tuition in schools. Funding has been made available since 2003 to provide adult ESOL specialists in Migrant Resource Centres to provide advice and referral services, and an adult ESOL pamphlet has been developed and translated into a number of community languages.

Until their refugee status is confirmed, Convention refugees must fund their own English language learning. After their refugee status is confirmed, and if they are still registered for work with W&I, they are immediately eligible for Training Opportunities assistance as they have the same status as Quota refugees. Family Reunion refugees can also access English language training if they are registered for work with W&I and have low qualifications and language barriers to entering employment. The ESOL Home Tutor Service provides tutors to refugee and migrant English as a second language learners free of charge, and there are also community groups providing some English language training for which individuals may not have to pay.

10.2.2 WHETHER PARTICIPANTS LEARNT ENGLISH BEFORE COMING TO NEW ZEALAND

Given that most research participants came from non-English speaking backgrounds, it is interesting to explore whether they had the opportunity to learn English before coming to New Zealand. *Recently arrived* refugees were asked at six months whether they had learnt any English before coming to New Zealand. Sixty-six percent of these individuals had learnt some English, including 79 percent of Convention refugees, 72 percent of Family Reunion refugees and 55 percent of Quota refugees.

Of those who had learnt some English while overseas, most had learnt at a school, university or polytechnic (67 percent) or a private language school (9 percent). A smaller number said they had learnt English from family or friends, through a private tutor or were self-taught.

10.3 ABILITY OF PARTICIPANTS TO SPEAK AND WRITE ENGLISH COMPARED TO AT ARRIVAL

10.3.1 Spoken English - *recently arrived* refugees

Recently arrived refugees were asked at two years to rate their ability to speak and write English compared to when they first arrived in New Zealand. The questions asked were similar to those used by Statistics New Zealand for the Longitudinal Immigration Survey: New Zealand (LisNZ).⁴⁴ It is important to bear in mind when interpreting the data in this section that participants rated their own English language ability. Also, because participants at two years were asked to rate their English language ability on arrival, this will depend on how well they remembered their skills at this time.

As would be expected, participants' English language ability improved with length of time in New Zealand. Seventeen percent of *recently arrived* refugees said they were able to speak English well or very well on arrival while sixty-four percent said they could not speak English or could not speak well on arrival. At two years, 43 percent said they could speak English well or very well and 32 percent indicated they could not speak English or could not speak well.

There were some differences in ability to speak English by refugee type. Convention refugees tended to have better English language ability on arrival than other participants. Forty-one percent of Convention refugees said they could speak English well or very well on arrival, compared to 10 percent of Quota and Family Reunion refugees. By the time they had been in New Zealand for two years, three-quarters of Convention refugees said they could speak English well or very well, compared to 28 percent of Quota refugees and 46

Two thirds of *recently arrived* refugees said they could not speak English well on arrival. Convention refugees rated their English language ability on arrival better than Quota or Family Reunion refugees.

⁴⁴ How well can you speak English in day to day conversations? Would you say you speak English....

Very well – you can talk about almost anything in English

Well – you can talk about many things in English

Fairly well – you can talk about some things in English

Not very well – you can only talk about basic/simple things in English

percent of Family Reunion refugees. At two years, 46 percent of Quota refugees and 26 percent of Family Reunion refugees said they could not speak English very well or could speak no more than a few words or phrases. Two percent of Family Reunion refugees said they could speak no English at two years. No Convention refugees rated their spoken English poorly at two years.

It is useful to compare self-rated English language ability by region of origin. At two years, 22 out of 28 participants (79 percent) from South Asia (Sri Lanka) said they could speak English very well, well or fairly well on arrival compared to 23 out of 76 (30 percent) from the Middle East, six out of 29 (21 percent) from the Horn of Africa, and only two out of 17 (12 percent) from South East Asia. Participants from all regions rated their spoken English language ability better at two years. The proportion who could speak very well, well or fairly well at two years ranged from 27 out of 29 participants (93 percent) from South Asia, 61 out of 81 (75 percent) from the Middle East, 16 out of 32 (50 percent) from the Horn of Africa to seven out of 18 (40 percent) from South East Asia.

Table 10.1 Self-rated ability of *recently arrived* refugees to speak English at arrival and at two years by refugee type and region

Ability to speak English	Refugee Type							
	Quota		Convention		Family Reunion		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
<i>On arrival</i>								
Very well	3	4	6	19	0	0	9	6
Well	4	6	7	22	5	10	16	11
Fairly well	9	13	9	28	10	21	28	19
Not very well	22	31	8	25	18	38	48	32
No more than a few words or phrases	32	46	2	6	13	27	47	31
None	0	0	0	0	2	4	2	1
Total	70	100	32	100	48	100	150	100
<i>At 2 year interview</i>								
Very well	8	11	11	34	7	13	26	16
Well	13	17	13	41	17	33	43	27
Fairly well	20	26	8	25	13	25	41	26
Not very well	20	26	0	0	7	13	27	17
No more than a few words or phrases	15	20	0	0	7	13	22	14
None	0	0	0	0	1	2	1	1
Total	76	100	32	100	52	100	160	100
	Region of origin							
	Middle East		Horn of Africa		South Asia		South East Asia	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
<i>On arrival</i>								
Very well	3	4	0	0	5	18	0	0
Well	6	8	2	7	8	29	0	0
Fairly well	14	18	4	14	9	32	2	12
Not very well	24	32	10	34	5	18	8	47
No more than a few words or phrases	27	36	13	45	1	4	7	41
None	2	3	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	76	100	29	100	28	100	17	100
<i>At 2 year interview</i>								
Very well	12	15	3	9	9	31	1	6
Well	21	26	7	22	14	48	1	6
Fairly well	28	35	6	19	4	14	5	28
Not very well	12	15	7	22	1	3	7	39
No more than a few words or phrases	7	9	9	28	1	3	4	22
None	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	81	100	32	100	29	100	18	100

After being in New Zealand for two years, three quarters of Convention refugees rated themselves as being able to speak English well or very well compared to 28 percent of Quota refugees and 46 percent of Family Reunion refugees.

Note

1. Eleven did not know how well they spoke English on arrival and one did not know at two years. One did not respond.

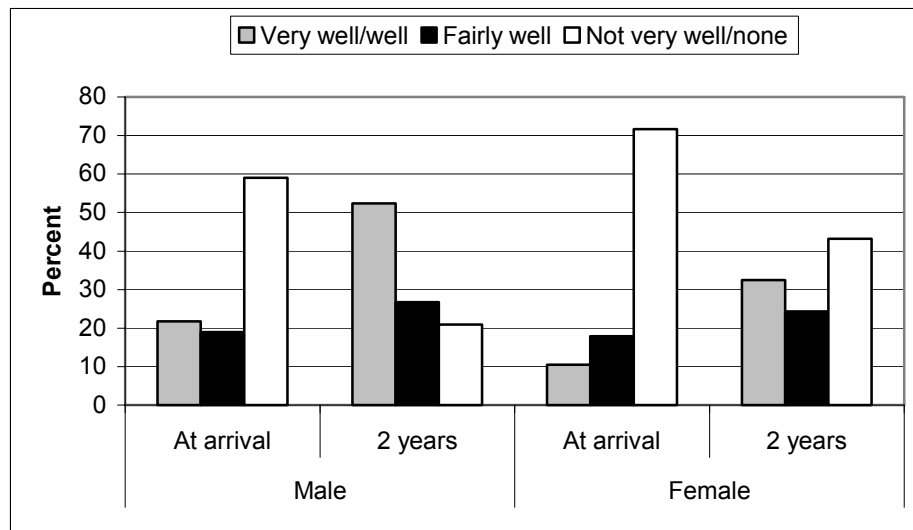
Of the recently arrived refugees, twice the proportion of men (22 percent) than women (10 percent) said they could speak English well on arrival. At two years, one-half of men could speak English well compared to one-third of females.

Figure 10.1 shows that there were differences in spoken English language ability by gender. Twice the proportion of men than women said they could speak English well or very well on arrival (22 percent compared to 10 percent), while 72 percent of woman said they could speak no English or could not speak well on arrival compared to 59 percent of men. A similar proportion of men and women could speak English fairly well on arrival (19 and 18 percent respectively), that is, they could talk about some things in English.

The spoken English language ability of both men and women had improved after they had been in New Zealand for two years. The proportion of men who could speak English well or very well more than doubled from 22 percent on arrival to 52 percent at two years. The proportion of women who could speak well or very well tripled from 10 percent on arrival to 32 percent at two years. Many of the Convention refugees were men and they had better English abilities which would account for much of this difference. Also, as discussed below (10.5.1), more women than men experienced difficulties accessing English language classes in New Zealand. Participants in focus groups discussed barriers to women accessing classes, including a lack of childcare, a lack of transport and women not being able to go out alone.

There were also differences in participants' ability to speak English by age group. After two years in New Zealand, 45 percent of participants over the age of 40 years could not speak English well (see Table A.4.11 in Appendix 4).

Figure 10.1 Self-rated ability of recently arrived refugees to speak English at arrival and at two years by gender $n=150$ (at arrival) and 160 (at two years)



Note

1. Eleven did not know how well they spoke English on arrival and one did not know at two years. One person did not respond.

10.3.2 Written English – recently arrived refugees

Recently arrived refugees' ability to write English at arrival and at two years is shown in Table 10.2. On arrival, 17 percent said they could write English well or very well, 16 percent said they could write fairly well (they could write some things in English) and 68 percent said they could not write English very well (44

percent said they could not write or could write no more than a few words or phrases).

Many *recently arrived* refugees had developed their English writing skills after being in New Zealand for two years. Thirty-one percent could write very well or well after this time. The proportion of *recently arrived* refugees who could not write or could write no more than a few words or phrases decreased from 44 percent on arrival to 26 percent at two years.

There were differences in written English language ability by refugee type similar to those for spoken English. On arrival, four in ten Convention refugees felt they could write English well or very well, compared to 9 percent of Quota refugees and 14 percent of Family Reunion refugees. After they had been in New Zealand for two years, just over half of Convention refugees said they could write English well or very well compared to 23 percent of Quota refugees and 31 percent of Family Reunion refugees.

On arrival in New Zealand, one third of *recently arrived* refugees could write English very well, well or fairly well. After two years in New Zealand, six in ten individuals could write English very well, well or fairly well.

Table 10.2 Self-rated ability of *recently arrived* refugees to write English on arrival and at two years

Ability to write English	Refugee type							
	Quota		Convention		Family Reunion		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
<i>On arrival</i>								
Very well	3	4	6	19	1	2	10	6
Well	4	5	7	22	6	12	17	11
Fairly well	6	8	7	22	13	25	26	16
Not very well	23	30	9	28	6	12	38	24
No more than a few words or phrases	21	28	2	6	10	19	33	21
Did not write	19	25	1	3	16	31	36	23
Total	76	100	32	100	52	100	160	100
<i>At 2 year interview</i>								
Very well	7	9	9	28	4	8	20	12
Well	11	14	8	25	12	23	31	19
Fairly well	15	20	14	44	14	26	43	27
Not very well	22	29	1	3	3	6	26	16
No more than a few words or phrases	15	20	0	0	10	19	25	16
Did not write	6	8	0	0	10	19	16	10
Total	76	100	32	100	53	100	161	100

Note

1. One person did not know how well they wrote English on arrival. One person did not respond.

10.3.3 Established refugees

Established refugees rated their ability to speak and write English on arrival compared to their ability at five years (see Table 10.3). Twelve percent felt they could speak English well or very well on arrival while 76 percent said they could not speak English or could not speak well. At five years, most *established* refugees could speak at least some English, although 26 percent said they could not speak well or could speak no more than a few words or phrases. Fifty

percent of *established* refugees at five years could speak English well or very well, 23 percent were able to speak English fairly well and 20 percent could speak about basic things in English.

Established refugees' ability to write English on arrival was similar to their ability to speak English. Seventy-six percent of *established* refugees were not able to write English or could not write well on arrival. At five years, 41 percent could write English well or very well and 20 percent could write fairly well. The proportion who could not write or who could not write well had halved at five years to 39 percent. However, this is still a substantial number of refugees with poor English ability, which in turn impacts on their chances of obtaining work and of participating fully in New Zealand society.

Table 10.3 Self-rated ability of *established* refugees to speak and write English on arrival and at five years

English ability	Communication							
	Speak				Write			
	On arrival		At 5 year interview		On arrival		At 5 year interview	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Very well	8	4	37	20	8	4	24	13
Well	14	8	56	30	15	8	53	28
Fairly well	22	12	44	23	22	12	38	20
Not very well	28	16	37	20	28	15	28	15
No more than a few words or phrases	62	35	12	6	38	20	25	13
None/do not write	44	25	2	1	78	41	21	11
Total	178	100	188	100	189	100	189	100

Note

1. Eleven did not know how well they spoke English on arrival and one did not know at five years.

Established refugees had similar spoken English ability by region of origin as *recently arrived* refugees (see Table 10.4). On arrival, refugees from South Asia had better English ability than other participants with four out of 12 able to speak English well and seven able to speak fairly well. A number of participants from the Horn of Africa also said they could speak some English on arrival (16 out of 84 could speak well and 10 could speak fairly well).

After five years, most participants could speak at least some English. The proportion who could not speak well after this time ranged from 22 out of the 84 (26 percent) participants from the Horn of Africa to six out of 12 (50 percent) from South East Asia. All participants from South Asia could speak English at least fairly well after five years.

Table 10.4 Self-rated ability of *established* refugees to speak English at arrival and at five years by region

Spoken English ability	Region of origin							
	Middle East		Horn of Africa		South Asia		South East Asia	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
<i>On arrival</i>								
Very well	1	1	5	6	2	17	0	0
Well	1	1	11	13	2	17	0	0
Fairly well	5	7	10	12	7	58	0	0
Not very well	6	9	18	21	1	8	3	25
No more than a few words or phrases	26	37	27	32	0	0	9	75
None	31	44	13	15	0	0	0	0
Total	70	100	84	100	12	100	12	100
<i>At 5 year interview</i>								
Very well	14	18	19	23	3	25	1	8
Well	18	23	27	32	8	67	3	25
Fairly well	25	31	16	19	1	8	2	17
Not very well	16	20	16	19	0	0	5	42
No more than a few words or phrases	5	6	6	7	0	0	1	8
None	2	3	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	80	100	84	100	12	100	12	100

Note

1. Eleven did not know how well the spoke English on arrival and one did not know at five years.

As with the *recently arrived* refugees, there were differences in *established* refugees' spoken English ability by gender (see Figure 10.2). At arrival, 15 percent of men said they could speak English well or very well compared to 10 percent of women. The corresponding figures at five years, were 56 percent for men and 41 percent for women. On arrival, 68 percent of men said they could not speak English well or could speak no English and this decreased to 14 percent at five years. Eighty-three percent of women could not speak English well or could speak no English on arrival and at five years the proportion with poor English had decreased markedly, although was still fairly high (43 percent).

There were differences in English language ability by age group. Forty percent of *established* refugees over the age of 40 years said they could not speak English well at five years (see Table A.4.12 in Appendix 4).

Of the *established* refugees, seven in ten men and eight in ten women could not speak English well or could speak no English on arrival. After being in New Zealand for five years, 14 percent of men rated their spoken English poorly as did 43 percent of women.

Figure 10.2 Ability of established refugees to speak English at arrival and at five years by gender *n*=178 (at arrival) and 188 (at five years)



Note

1. Eleven did not know how well the spoke English on arrival and one did not know at five years.

10.3.4 Reasons for improvements in English language ability

Participants whose English language ability had improved since coming to New Zealand were asked to suggest reasons for this. *Recently arrived* and *established* refugees' responses were similar. The most common reason given was contact with English language speakers. These individuals said they came into contact with English language speakers in daily activities, through friends and family, and through the media (see Table 10.5).

“Because I'm living in New Zealand which is an English speaking country and I'm in contact with English language daily (TV, shopping, radio etc).”

Afghan Convention refugee, two years

Other important reasons for improvements in spoken English language ability were English language courses and learning at school. Most participants did not specify the type of English language course, although some mentioned church or community classes, Training Opportunities courses and home tutors. Other participants said being in the workplace helped to improve their English. Many *established* refugees said their spoken English improved through study at tertiary institutions and some said it was due to personal effort and self-study.

Formal education was an important method for those participants who had improved their written English, through English language courses, study at school and tertiary institutions and other study. A smaller number said family or friends or mixing with people generally helped.

“Going to an English course. Having some home tutors. Getting involved more with our sponsors.”

Iraqi Quota refugee, two years

“Language courses; going to work; being able to talk with English speakers.”

Somali Quota refugee, two years

Table 10.5 Reasons for improvements in participants' English language ability

Refugee type	
<i>Recently arrived (2 years)</i> (responses)	<i>Established</i> (responses)
Spoken English <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Contact with English language speakers (101) ▪ English language courses (48) ▪ At school (21) ▪ In the workplace (17) ▪ Home tutor (6) 	Spoken English <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Contact with English language speakers (92) ▪ English language courses (73) ▪ Study at school or tertiary institute (52) ▪ Radio or television (28) ▪ In the workplace (26) ▪ Personal effort or self-study (16)
Written English <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ English language courses (37) ▪ At school (15 responses) ▪ Study (12) ▪ Family and friends (9) ▪ In the workplace (8) ▪ Mixing with people generally (5) 	Written English <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ School or tertiary study (47) ▪ Personal effort or self-study (44) ▪ English language courses (37) ▪ Friends or family (10)

Note:

1. Participants could give multiple responses.

“Attending language course and self study. Speaking to people, New Zealand people are helpful; they are very nice helping you when you speak.”

Iraqi Quota refugee, five years

“I go to school and we have to speak English at school to the teacher and have been able to practice on writing.”

Iranian Quota refugee, two years

“Attended an English course; also I speak in English at work.”

Sri Lankan Quota refugee, five years

10.4 LEARNING ENGLISH

Participants were asked whether they had learnt any English in New Zealand (through formal or informal methods). At six months, three quarters of *recently arrived* refugees said they had learnt English since arriving in New Zealand (see Table 10.6). At two years, 86 percent had learnt English. A number of people did not answer this question at two years as they indicated they did not know or could not remember.

At six months, more Quota refugees than other refugee groups had learnt English. Eighty-six percent of Quota refugees had learnt English at six months compared to 67 percent of Family Reunion refugees and 53 percent of Convention refugees. A number of Convention refugees said they spoke English very well or well on arrival, so this group may not have had the same need to learn as other participants. The proportion of participants who had learnt English at two years was similar across all refugee groups.

Of the four Convention refugees who had not learnt any English in New Zealand, three said they spoke English very well at two years and one said they spoke fairly well. Most of the Quota refugees who had not learnt English could speak no more than a few words or phrases at two years. Four of the nine Family Reunion refugees who had not learnt English said they could speak fairly well or well at two years, while four said they could speak no more than a few words or phrases.⁴⁵ Excluding the six individuals who said they spoke English well or

“I read and write a lot. I have formal learning at school. I write my diary twice a week, it's a kind of exercise in writing.”

Vietnamese Quota refugee, five years

⁴⁵ One Family Reunion refugee did not know how well they spoke English at two years.

very well at two years (and perhaps did not need to learn English), all apart from one who had not learnt English were over the age of 40 years.

Table 10.6 Whether *recently arrived* refugees had learnt English since arrival in New Zealand

Whether learnt English	Refugee type							
	Quota		Convention		Family Reunion		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
6 months								
Yes	82	86	21	53	46	67	149	73
No	13	14	19	48	23	33	55	27
Total	95	100	40	100	69	100	204	100
2 years								
Yes	57	89	25	86	41	82	123	86
No	7	11	4	14	9	18	20	14
Total	64	100	29	100	50	100	143	100

Note

1. At six months, two did not know and three did not respond. At two years, 17 did not know (or did not remember) and two did not respond.

10.4.1 Methods of learning English - *recently arrived* refugees

Table 10.7 shows the ways *recently arrived* refugees identified that they had learnt English in New Zealand. Participants learnt English in a variety of ways with most individuals indicating more than one method. A number of people said they learnt English from the media (46 percent at six months and 58 percent at two years). Other important ways of learning English when asked at six months, included W&I funded courses (31 percent), family and friends (28 percent), extra tuition at school (26 percent), self study (21 percent) and through the ESOL Home Tutor Service (20 percent).

At two years, half of *recently arrived* refugees said they learnt English from family and friends. Six in ten Convention and Family Reunion refugees learnt English from family and friends compared to four in ten Quota refugees. One quarter of *recently arrived* refugees at two years said they learnt English in the workplace (including 68 percent of Convention refugees).

Table 10.7 Ways recently arrived refugees had learnt English

Ways of learning English	Refugee type							
	Quota		Convention		Family Reunion		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
6 months								
Television/Radio	24	30	13	62	31	67	68	46
W&I	25	31	8	38	13	28	46	31
Family/Friends	12	15	8	38	21	46	41	28
Extra tuition at school	30	37	0	0	8	17	38	26
Self study	13	16	6	29	12	26	31	21
ESOL	21	26	3	14	5	11	29	20
Community education groups	18	22	2	10	5	11	25	17
University/Polytechnic	9	11	6	29	4	9	19	13
Church	7	9	2	10	5	11	14	9
Work	1	1	8	38	3	7	12	8
Private training establishment	4	5	2	10	0	0	6	4
Private language school	2	2	1	5	1	2	4	3
Ethnic association	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Other	8	10	1	5	1	2	10	7
Total participants	81		21		46		148	
2 years								
Television/Radio	22	39	20	80	29	71	71	58
W&I	15	26	4	16	10	24	29	24
Family/Friends	21	37	15	60	24	59	60	49
Extra tuition at school	1	2		0	4	10	5	4
Self study	12	21	6	24	12	29	30	24
ESOL	14	25	2	8	3	7	19	15
Community education groups	16	28	2	8	8	20	26	21
University/Polytechnic	12	21	5	20	2	5	19	15
Church	10	18	1	4	1	2	12	10
Work	3	5	17	68	12	29	32	26
Private training establishment	2	4	2	8	0	0	4	3
Private language school	2	4	2	8	1	2	5	4
Ethnic association	2	4	0	0	0	0	2	2
Other	11	19	3	12	3	7	17	14
Total participants	57		25		41		123	

Note

1. At six months, one did not respond.
2. Participants could give multiple responses so columns do not add to 100 percent.

Those who said they learnt English using more than one method were asked which method they found the most useful. Of the 103 individuals who answered this question at six months, 25 percent said the most useful way to learn English was at an educational institution such as a school, university or polytechnic. Sixteen percent of participants at six months said community courses were the most useful and 15 percent said that W&I or Training Opportunities courses were the most useful. The main reasons participants gave for the above courses being

“Enough time is allocated, teachers use different strategies for practicing like group work, class work and homework, and putting learners in situations where they ask and answer questions. Teachers make me feel supported.”

Ethiopian Quota refugee, two years

“I listen to others talking English. I communicate in English with customers.”

Sri Lankan Convention refugee, two years

Important ways established refugees learnt English were, through the media (69 percent), through self study (47 percent) and from family and friends (45 percent).

“Having the teacher to explain it for you is very invaluable.”

Somali Quota refugee, five years

useful included good quality teachers and the opportunity to communicate with others in English. *Recently arrived* refugees interviewed at two years gave similar responses and often commented these methods were useful because teachers were professional and helpful, enough time was allocated for learning and the learning was systematic, planned and academic.

“Professional teachers teach at school. It’s more systematic and regular. Better resources.”

Burmese Quota refugee, two years

Twelve percent of participants interviewed at two years said the most useful way to learn English was at work. The main reason given for this was they used English most of the day and it had a practical application for them. Eleven percent said the most useful method was through the media and 10 percent said conversations with family and friends. Participants who thought family and friends were the most useful way to learn English did so because they were able to speak conversational English with family and friends on a daily basis. Participants said they found friends and family to be supportive, understanding and helpful with providing translations, explaining terms and correcting mistakes.

10.4.2 Established refugees

One hundred and forty-four *established* refugees said they had learnt English in New Zealand and 22 said they had not. A further 23 said they did not know. Of the 22 who had not learnt English, ten said they could speak English very well or well at five years, one said they could speak fairly well and nine said they could speak no English or no more than a few words or phrases.

Table 10.8 shows the variety of ways *established* refugees identified that they had learnt English in New Zealand. Their methods were similar to those used by *recently arrived* refugees, although more *established* refugees said they learnt English through self-study. A number said they had learnt English at their workplace (30 percent) or at a university or polytechnic (28 percent). As with *recently arrived* refugees, *established* refugees said the most useful way to learn English was at educational institutions, followed by other English language classes, again because of the quality of the teachers.

Other reasons given for courses being useful were the opportunity to meet and mix with different people, being required to speak English, and the course being held over a long period of time. A few individuals mentioned courses were useful because they were appropriately targeted, they provided the opportunity to practise or get started, provided clarification with the structure of English and were held regularly.

Table 10.8 Ways established refugees had learnt English

Ways of learning English	Total	
	n	%
Television/Radio	100	69
Self study	67	47
Family/friends	65	45
W&I	55	38
Work	43	30
University/Polytechnic	40	28
Community education groups	34	24
ESOL	31	22
Church	21	15
School	20	14
Private training establishment	10	7
Ethnic association	8	6
Private tutor	1	1
Other	12	8
Total participants	144	

Note

1. Participants could give multiple responses so does not add to 100 percent.

A group of Iranian women who took part in a focus group said they found English language courses run by UNITEC and AUT beneficial. A group of Somali women said they preferred the Training Opportunities courses because of their links to the workplace. Women in both groups mentioned that courses run by their own communities were very good.

10.4.3 Paying for English language courses

A number of *recently arrived* refugees paid to learn English in New Zealand. Fifteen percent of those who had learnt English at six months and 18 percent at two years indicated they had paid for an English language course. At both interviews, around one quarter of Family Reunion refugees had paid to study English, while the proportion of Convention refugees paying for English study decreased from 32 percent at six months to 16 percent at two years. Five percent of Quota refugees interviewed at six months and 14 percent at two years paid for English study. This indicates that some Quota refugees carried out English language study in addition to the free Training Opportunities courses to which they were entitled.

Table 10.9 shows whether participants who paid for English language courses received financial assistance. At six months, 16 out of 23 *recently arrived* refugees who paid for English language study had received help. Of the 21 refugees who had paid for English language study at two years, 19 had received help. Of the 35 *established* refugees who had paid for English study, 25 received some help.

For *recently arrived* refugees, the main source of help with paying for English language courses was W&I. Of the 25 *established* refugees who received assistance at five years, 18 received this help from W&I. Other sources of help mentioned by a few individuals at five years were personal and student loans and sponsors. One person mentioned their employer had provided assistance with course funds.

“We have to mix and talk with people at school and work, and you have to talk to your friends in English as well.”

Iraqi Quota refugee, five years

Fifteen percent of recently arrived refugees at six months and 18 percent at two years had paid for English language classes. Quota refugees were less likely than other refugee groups to pay for English language learning.

Table 10.9 Whether participants received help paying for English language courses

Received help paying for English language course	Refugee type		
	<i>Recently arrived</i>		<i>Established</i>
	6 months	2 years	
	n	n	n
Yes	16	19	25
No	7	2	10
Total number	23	21	35

Note

1. At two years, one did not respond.

10.5 PROBLEMS TRYING TO LEARN ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN NEW ZEALAND

The importance of learning English has already been noted. It is also important to look at the barriers to learning English. Altinkaya (1995) notes that a lack of accessible English classes, interpreters or translated material has the potential to create an underclass of refugees. The Canadian Taskforce on Mental Health Issues Affecting Immigrants and Refugees (1998) notes that many immigrant women and older people are cut off from classes while others suffer from inadequate and/or inconsistent assessments and referral practices.

10.5.1 *Recently arrived* refugees

Table 10.10 shows the proportion of *recently arrived* refugees who had experienced problems learning English. At six months, 20 percent of participants had experienced problems trying to learn English in New Zealand (ranging from 17 percent of Quota refugees to 25 percent of Family Reunion refugees). The most common problems these individuals experienced were not knowing how to access classes (9 responses), classes being too expensive, problems with transport, and needing to look after their children (8 responses each).

At two years, a smaller proportion (16 percent) had experienced problems since their last interview. Only 6 percent of Convention refugees had experienced problems, compared to 21 percent of Family Reunion refugees and 17 percent of Quota refugees. The main problems these individuals discussed included needing to look after their family (8 responses), transport problems (8 responses), not having a home tutor (6 responses) and health problems (5 responses). Three people mentioned a lack of childcare facilities or that childcare was expensive, and three people said they lacked the necessary information about classes.

At six months, 20 percent of *recently arrived* refugees had experienced problems trying to learn English. At two years, 16 percent had experienced problems since their last interview.

“Not knowing where to start; courses are expensive; a shortage of specific English programmes.”

Somali Convention Refugee, six months

Table 10.10 Whether *recently arrived* refugees had experienced problems trying to learn English in New Zealand

Problems learning English	Refugee type			
	Quota	Convention	Family Reunion	Total
	%	%	%	%
6 months (since arrival)				
Yes	17	20	25	20
No	83	80	75	80
Total percent	100	100	100	100
Total number	95	41	69	205
2 years (since last interview)				
Yes	17	6	21	16
No	83	94	79	84
Total percent	100	100	100	100
Total number	75	32	52	159

Note

1. At six months, one did not know and three did not respond. At two years, one did not know and two did not respond.

10.5.2 Established refugees

Just over one quarter of *established* refugees (51 individuals) indicated they had experienced problems trying to learn English in New Zealand. A higher proportion of women (38 percent) than men (18 percent) said they had experienced problems.

The main problem discussed by *established* refugees was a lack of time to learn English because of childcare responsibilities (24 responses). The majority of those who raised this issue were women, reflecting the greater number of women than men who had experienced difficulties trying to learn English in New Zealand.

Another barrier to learning English was the cost involved. Nine individuals commented that course costs were expensive and eight said other costs associated with learning English were too high (including transport and childcare). A number of people said that a lack of transport made it difficult for them to learn English (10 responses). Other issues were not having enough time due to work or other commitments (9 responses), health problems (7 responses) and not knowing where to go to access classes (5 responses). A few people felt the course they had attended was not good and they were not making the progress they felt they should be.

“Time was a problem for me because I have young children and I’m the only one responsible for them.”

Iranian Quota refugee, five years

10.5.3 Problems trying to learn English by gender

When looked at by gender, more women than men had problems accessing English language study or training (see Table 10.11). At six months, 26 percent of women said they had problems compared to 15 percent of men. At two years, nearly twice the proportion of women (22 percent) than men (12 percent) said they had experienced problems since their last interview.

Of the *established* refugees interviewed at five years, 38 percent of women had experienced problems trying to learn English in New Zealand, compared to 18 percent of men.

“Last year I studied at [name] Centre. This year I’ve got a small child and there is no child care facility. I could not go there.”

Burmese Quota refugee, two years

Table 10.11 Whether participants had experienced problems trying to learn English in New Zealand by gender

Problems learning English	Refugee type					
	Recently arrived				Established (since arrival)	
	6 months (since arrival)		2 years (since last interview)		Male	Female
	Male %	Female %	Male %	Female %	Male %	Female %
Yes	15	26	12	22	18	38
No	85	74	88	78	82	62
Total percent	100	100	100	100	100	100
Total number	109	96	85	74	101	87

Note:

1. Of the *recently arrived* refugees at six months, one did not know and three did not respond. At two years, one did not know and two did not respond. One *established* refugee did not respond.

“It’s a huge frustration. Courses that cost are a problem too. When they have children, the costs keep them on the edge of survival financially. They often want advice about what to sacrifice. And it’s really hard to help on that one.”

Service provider, focus group

Access to English language study for women was an issue raised in focus groups. Service providers felt issues such as difficulties finding appropriate childcare, a lack of transport and men not allowing women to go out alone meant learning English was more difficult for women than for men.

A group of Iranian women discussed some barriers they had experienced trying to learn English. One woman who had been in New Zealand for eight years had enquired about getting a subsidy to learn English, but was told that talking to her children at home should be enough. Some mentioned the distance to travel to classes also made it difficult.

A Burmese woman who took part in a focus group said she would like to study English but could not because she had to look after her children and could not access appropriate childcare. Other women who took part in this focus group said childcare was available when they had English lessons at AUT while at Mangere, but they were unhappy with the ratio of staff to children.

10.5.4 Findings from focus groups

“I’m attending TOPS [Training Opportunities] courses for the last six years. I do not think I have achieved what should be achieved...”

Ethiopian Quota refugee, five years

A group of Burmese men discussed a number of difficulties they had experienced learning English. These problems mainly related to the specific course they were taking and the style of learning being different to that which they were used to. Some of the problems discussed were a lack of evaluation as to whether they were learning, a lack of structure to the lessons, teachers not correcting their mistakes, the level taught being too high for their ability and being taught American English. The men also said that because the whole class was Burmese, there were not many opportunities to practise speaking English, as they spoke Burmese when together.

“Yes, they teach us and we learn. But we cannot learn all, just a few percent of the lesson per week is what we learn.”

Burmese man, focus group

A group of Kurdish men said a problem they experienced studying English was that they did not always understand the terminology used in their textbooks. These individuals thought it would be more useful to have a textbook with both English and Kurdish or English and Farsi translations.

“English takes seven years to learn; it’s a hard language, it takes time. This learning needs to be supported for that long.”

Service provider, focus group

A number of service providers felt English language courses needed to be more targeted at skills that would prepare refugees for the ‘real world’. Some service providers noted that many English language courses were focused on English for employment. Service providers felt English courses needed to be targeted at more practical areas such as shopping and banking. Service providers also commented that English was a difficult language and people needed to be supported for as long as it takes to learn.

10.6 REASONS FOR LEARNING ENGLISH

Recently arrived refugees at six months and *established* refugees who had learnt English in New Zealand were asked what their main reasons were for wanting to improve their English language ability. At six months, the main reason participants gave was to get a job (74 responses). Other important reasons included to ‘survive’ and deal with everyday events (58 responses), in order to do further study or training (52 responses) and for communicating and socialising (47 responses). Twenty-nine people wanted to improve their English language so they could integrate into New Zealand society.

“I learnt English for survival, this is an English speaking country. I want to read the letters that come to my house. I feel silly.”

Iraqi Quota refugee, six months

Of the 144 *established* refugees who responded to this question, 96 wanted to improve their English language ability for everyday communication and 76 individuals wanted to improve their English ability so they could get a job.

“I’m going to school, and I would like, in future, to continue my study at university. For this and further study, I’m trying to learn more English language with other subjects.”

Iraqi Quota refugee, five years

Another important reason why *established* refugees wanted to improve their English was so they could embark on further study or training (51 responses). Nineteen individuals wanted to improve their English for family reasons and 17 individuals wanted to understand New Zealand society more.

“English is very important. Even now if we had a job, we couldn’t do the job because of our English. So we want to get a benefit until we get to a reasonable level of English.”

Burmese man, focus group

Participants in focus groups had similar reasons for learning English. A group of Burmese refugees in Nelson said the main reasons they were learning English were for survival and to get employment. A group of Iranian women felt it was very important to learn English and felt once they had improved their English language abilities they would be able to take part in the jobs for which they were qualified.

10.7 INTERPRETERS AND TRANSLATORS

When refugees first arrive in New Zealand, and for some time after that, they may only be able to communicate with the host community through other people. It is therefore important to have competent translators and interpreters available to help refugees communicate with the wider society. More resources are being put into interpreting and translating services with a pilot Language Line in place and operating with a number of government agencies including W&I and the Housing New Zealand Corporation (HNZC).⁴⁶

Eighty-three percent of recently arrived refugees interviewed at six months and 48 percent at two years needed help from an interpreter or translator.

Table 10.12 shows the proportion of *recently arrived* refugees who needed help with interpreting and translating English decreased with length of time in New Zealand. At six months, 83 percent of *recently arrived* refugees had needed help with interpreting or translating, compared to 48 percent at two years who had needed help in the past year. At six months, the proportion of participants who had needed help was similar across refugee groups (ranging from 80 percent of Convention refugees to 87 percent of Family Reunion refugees). At two years, only 9 percent of Convention refugees had needed help with interpreting or translating compared to 55 percent of Family Reunion refugees and 61 percent of Quota refugees.

Table 10.12 Whether *recently arrived* refugees had needed help with interpreting and translating English in New Zealand

Whether help was needed	Refugee type							
	Quota		Convention		Family Reunion		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
6 months (since arrival)								
Yes	78	81	32	80	62	87	172	83
No	18	19	8	20	9	13	35	17
Total	96	100	40	100	71	100	207	100
2 years (in the past 12 months)								
Yes	46	61	3	9	29	55	78	48
No	30	39	29	91	24	45	83	52
Total	76	100	32	100	53	100	161	100

Note

1. At six months, two did not respond. At two years, one did not respond.

Established refugees who had been in New Zealand for five years were asked if they had needed help from an interpreter or translator in the last year. One third of these individuals said they had needed help.

“Because I’m living here, I need a job. I need to communicate with the people.”

Iranian Quota refugee, five years

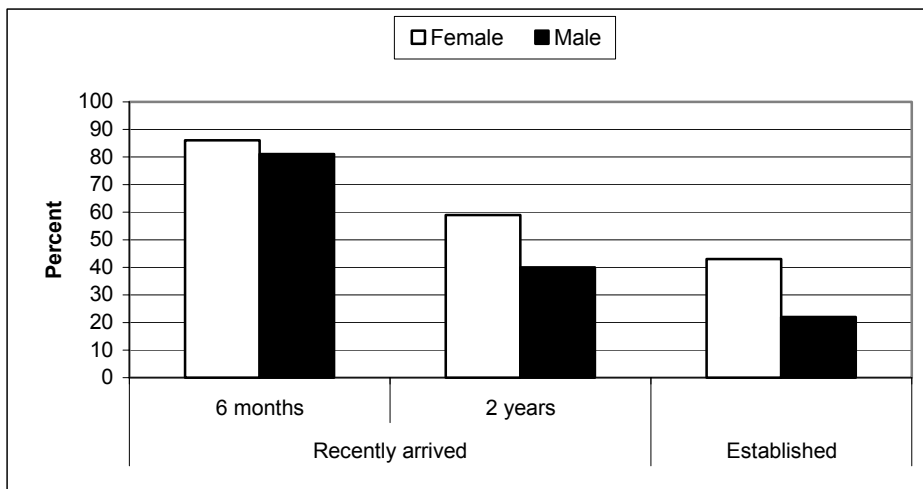
Figure 10.3 shows the proportion of *recently arrived* and *established* refugees who had needed help with interpreting and translating by gender. Of the *recently arrived* refugees interviewed at six months, a similar proportion of men and

⁴⁶ The telephone interpreting service known as Language Line has been piloted by the Office of Ethnic Affairs for a 12 month period. It includes 30 different languages and is available free of charge.

women had needed interpreting or translating help in New Zealand (81 and 86 percent respectively). However, at two years, 59 percent of women had needed help with interpreting or translating compared to 40 percent of men.

Of the *established* refugees, twice the proportion of women than men had needed help with interpreting or translating in New Zealand (43 percent compared to 22 percent). One reason for more women than men needing help with interpreting and translation could be that they were the ones who were most often responsible for taking children to visit the doctor.

Figure 10.3 Whether help was needed with interpreting and translation by gender n=207 (6 months), 161 (2 years), 189 (established)



Note

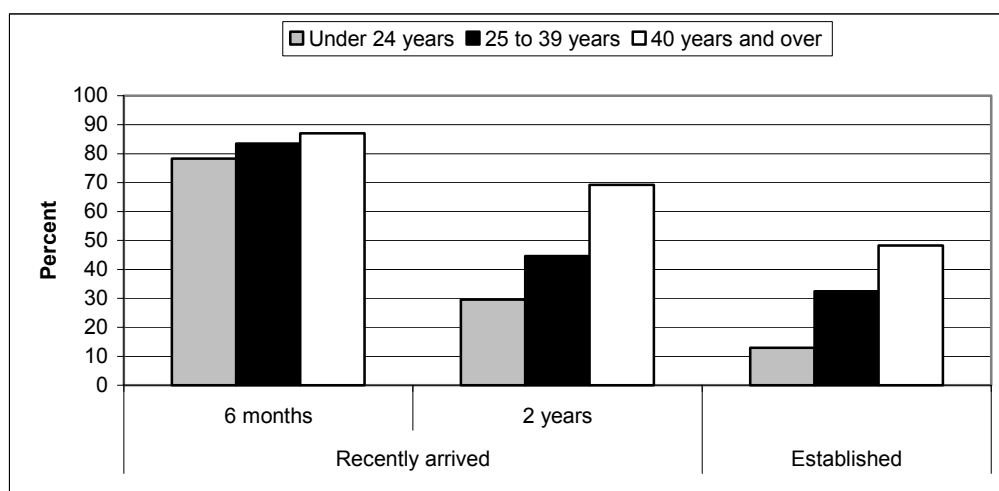
1. Of the *recently arrived* refugees interviewed at six months, two did not respond. At two years, one did not respond.

Figure 10.4 shows the proportion of participants who had needed help with interpreting and translation by age group. For both *recently arrived* and *established* refugees, the need for help increased with age. This difference was less noticeable at six months, with the proportion needing help ranging from 78 percent of those under 24 years to 87 percent of those over 40 years. At two years, 30 percent of *recently arrived* refugees younger than 24 years needed help from interpreters and translators, compared to 69 percent of those aged 40 years and over. Only 13 percent of *established* refugees younger than 24 years needed help from interpreters and translators, compared to 48 percent of those aged 40 years and over.

More women than men needed help with interpreting and translation. Of the *recently arrived* refugees interviewed at two years, six in ten women needed help compared to four in ten men. Of the *established* refugees, 43 percent of women needed help compared to 22 percent of men.

A higher proportion of older refugees had needed help from an interpreter or translator. Of the *recently arrived* refugees interviewed at two years, seven in ten of those aged over 40 years needed help. For *established* refugees, half of those over 40 years had needed this help.

Figure 10.4 Whether help was needed with interpreting and translation by age group *n*=207 (6 months), 161 (2 years), 189 (established)



Note

1. Of the *recently arrived* refugees interviewed at six months, two did not respond. At two years, one did not respond

10.7.1 Situations where refugees needed help from an interpreter or translator

For *recently arrived* refugees who had been in New Zealand for six months, help was required in a number of settings:

- going to W&I (92 responses);
- going to the GP or for general healthcare (88 responses);
- for daily activities such as shopping and going to the bank (44 responses);
- going to the hospital or specialist healthcare (43 responses);
- for immigration procedures (27 responses); and
- at school (24 responses).

A smaller number of individuals interviewed at six months said they needed help with interpreting and translating in situations such as at HNZC and other government departments and with understanding documents. Eleven people said they needed help from an interpreter or translator in all situations.

“To see a doctor or nurse, shopping, everywhere I need an interpreter.”

Afghan Family Reunion refugee, two years

After being in New Zealand for two years, the main areas *recently arrived* refugees needed interpreting or translating help was when visiting the hospital or a GP (60 responses) and going to W&I (41 responses).

“Sometimes I use my kids. At WINZ [W&I], shopping, filling in forms.”

Iraqi Quota refugee, two years

A smaller number of participants at two years indicated other areas they needed help. These were:

- at school (12 responses);
- with understanding documentation (12 responses);
- with other government agencies (8 responses);
- at HNZC (6 responses); and
- in daily activities such as shopping (5 responses).

One third of *established* refugees said they had needed help with interpreting or translating in the past year. Again, the two main areas help was needed were in healthcare settings (53 responses) and at W&I (15 responses).

10.7.2 Whether participants received the help they needed

An important aspect of interpreting and translation services is ensuring the services are available when required. Most participants indicated they got the interpreting help they required (see Table 10.13). Of the *recently arrived* refugees who needed help with interpreting and translation, 85 percent at six months and 86 percent at two years said they got the help they required. A number of participants indicated they only got the help they needed some of the time (13 percent at six months, 12 percent at two years and 12 percent of *established* refugees).

Table 10.13 Whether participants got the interpreting and translation help they needed

Whether the help was received	Refugee type		
	<i>Recently arrived</i>		<i>Established</i>
	6 months	2 years	
	%	%	%
Yes	85	86	88
Only some of the time	13	12	12
No	2	3	0
Total percent	100	100	100
Total number	172	78	60

Research participants who did not get the interpreting or translation help they required (or only got the help some of the time) were asked the reasons. Half of the 26 *recently arrived* refugees at six months who did not get the help they needed said the main reason for this was they did not know how to access an interpreter. Other reasons given by *recently arrived* and *established* refugees included friends or trained interpreters not being available at the time, not being able to find an interpreter or not having the time to find one.

Service providers in Auckland and Wellington expressed concerns about the lack of interpreters available without charge. Providers felt this often led to children having to interpret for their parents which was not ideal particularly if children had to be taken out of school or if it was an issue they did not want to discuss with their children. The providers commented that government departments and other organisations generally had policy that supported the provision of interpreters, but the resources and awareness were not there.

“There is a lack of money coming down and there is also the ignorance of the staff. All government departments and district health boards have policy on using interpreters. But the managers probably aren’t aware of that. This issue needs advocacy and more money.”

Service provider, focus group

“It’s really important to have access to interpreters which I do, but some health service providers don’t seem to budget for it. It’s almost as if having an interpreter is a privilege, not an absolute necessity, and for me it is an absolute necessity.”

Service provider, focus group

10.7.3 Who participants used as interpreters and translators

Participants were asked who they used to interpret or translate for them (see Table 10.14). A variety of individuals and organisations were used. Half of the *recently arrived* refugees interviewed at six months used family members (excluding their children) to interpret or translate, followed by 44 percent who used a professional and 43 percent who used a friend. Twenty-six percent of participants at six months indicated they used their children to interpret or translate, although this increased to 42 percent at two years.

At two years, 53 percent of participants used friends to interpret or translate. Forty-one percent used a professional interpreter or translator.

Over half of *established* refugees had used a professional interpreter or translator, while 46 percent had used a friend and 41 percent had used their children. Twenty-nine percent of *established* refugees used a family member.

Table 10.14 Who had interpreted or translated for participants

Who interpreted/translated	Refugee type		
	<i>Recently arrived</i>		<i>Established</i>
	6 months	2 years	
	%	%	%
Family member (not children)	48	39	29
Professional	44	41	54
Friend	43	53	46
Children	26	42	41
Person at place where went for help	12	29	19
Teacher	5	9	5
Neighbour	5	4	3
Other	5	4	2
Total participants	168	76	59

Note

1. One *established* refugee did not know.
2. Participants could give multiple responses so columns do not add to 100 percent.

Recently arrived and established refugees most often used a family member (including their children) to interpret or translate for them.

Participants who had more than one individual or organisation interpret or translate for them were asked who had done this the most. At six months, family members (including children) were used more than other individuals for 48 percent of participants. Professional interpreters and translators (24 percent) and friends (23 percent) were also relied upon. At two years, most often it was children or another family member who had interpreted or translated.

For those participants who had used children, other family members and friends to interpret or translate, the main reasons were their availability and their close relationship. Those *recently arrived* refugees who mostly used a professional interpreter or translator said this was because of their skills and qualifications. Availability was also a reason given for using a professional to interpret or translate at six months.

Of the *established* refugees, 35 individuals had used more than one person or organisation to interpret or translate and were asked who they used the most.

Nearly six in ten used family members (including children) the most, followed by one quarter who most often used a professional. *Established* refugees said they used family members the most because of their availability and because they were trusted.

10.7.4 Satisfaction with professional interpreting or translating services

Recently arrived refugees at two years and *established* refugees who had used a professional interpreter or translator were asked how satisfied they were with the service they received. Forty-six people responded to this question at two years and most people were satisfied or very satisfied. Three individuals indicated they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.

The majority of refugees who had used a professional from an interpreting or translation service were satisfied with the service they received.

Forty-two *established* refugees had used a professional to interpret or translate for them. Most of these participants were satisfied or very satisfied with the service they received, with two individuals indicating they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied and two individuals indicating they were dissatisfied.

10.8 SUMMARY

Participants came to New Zealand with varied abilities in English and subsequently had differing needs for learning English. Sixty-six percent of *recently arrived* refugees had learnt some English before coming to New Zealand, including 79 percent of Convention, 72 percent of Family Reunion and 55 percent of Quota refugees.

Seventeen percent of *recently arrived* refugees said they were able to speak English well on arrival while sixty-four percent said they could not speak English or could not speak well. Convention refugees rated their English language ability on arrival higher than other participants. As expected, *recently arrived* refugees' English language ability had improved after two years, with 43 percent saying they could speak English well, 26 percent fairly well and 32 percent not well. Quota refugees continued to rate their English language ability lower than other participants at two years, with only 28 percent saying they could speak English well compared to 46 percent of Family Reunion and 75 percent of Convention refugees.

Seventy-six percent of *established* refugees said they could not speak well on arrival, while 12 percent said they could speak well and another 12 percent fairly well. After five years, 50 percent said they could speak English well, 23 percent fairly well and 27 percent not well.

For both *recently arrived* and *established* refugees, there were similar differences in English language ability by region of origin. Participants from South Asia tended to rate their English ability higher than other participants and those from South East Asia rated their ability lower.

There were also differences across the groups by gender. Seventy-two percent of *recently arrived* women said they could not speak English well on arrival (compared to 59 percent of men) and these gender differences persisted at two years. This trend was also evident for *established* refugees. Sixty-eight percent

of men said they could not speak English well on arrival, decreasing to 14 percent at five years. Eighty-three percent of women said they could not speak English well on arrival and at five years the proportion with poor English was still quite high (43 percent). More women than men said they had experienced problems accessing English language classes in New Zealand. Participants in focus groups felt that difficulties with childcare, a lack of transport and women from some cultures not being able to go out alone made it difficult for them to study English.

A substantial proportion of participants over the age of 40 years said they could not speak English well, even after two years (for *recently arrived* refugees) and after five years (for *established* refugees).

After two years in New Zealand, most *recently arrived* refugees had learnt some English, as had most *established* refugees after five years. Twenty *recently arrived* refugees at two years and 22 *established* refugees had not learnt English in New Zealand. Some of those who had not learnt English said they spoke English well (and so did not need to learn English) while others said they could speak no more than a few words or phrases. Nearly all of the *recently arrived* Quota refugees who had not learnt English could speak no more than a few words or phrases at two years.

Many refugees said the main means for improvements in their spoken English language ability were informal such as contact with family and friends, daily activities and the media. Participants said English language courses were important for improvements to written English. However, when asked what the best way to learn English, most people said an educational institution such as a school, university or polytechnic was the most effective. Formal study at school, university or polytechnic and English language classes (such as W&I and Training Opportunities courses) were considered the most useful ways to learn English often because of the quality of the teachers. This highlights the importance of providing formal learning environments in which refugees can learn English.

The need for interpreters and translators decreased with length of time in New Zealand. More women than men needed assistance from interpreters and translators, perhaps because they more often took their children to visit a GP, a place where such assistance was often needed. For *recently arrived* refugees at two years and *established* refugees, older participants were more likely than younger participants to need assistance from interpreters and translators. This reflects the poorer English language ability of these individuals.

11 ADULT EDUCATION

11.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter looks at the experiences of research participants aged 17 years and over who had taken part in study and training in New Zealand. Some of the findings in this chapter need to be treated with caution. Participants were asked about study or training they had taken part in aside from English language study, however, many participants included English language study in their responses. This is detailed in the appropriate places below.

Of the *recently arrived* refugees interviewed at six months, 197 individuals responded to the questions on study and training and, at two years, 155 people responded. Of the *established* refugees, 173 responded these questions. The topics covered in this chapter include:

- the context around adult education;
- qualifications before arrival and NZQA assessment;
- education in New Zealand;
- how useful was the study undertaken;
- problems experienced trying to do study; and
- student loans.

Key themes

- ➔ One quarter of *recently arrived* refugees interviewed at six months said they had taken part in study or training. At two years, one quarter said they done some study since they were last interviewed. However, a number of these people were in fact referring to English language study. Family Reunion refugees were less likely than other participants to have done study or training.
 - ➔ Four in ten *established* refugees had done some study or training since arriving in New Zealand. The main type of study was at secondary school.
 - ➔ Most of those who had done study or training in New Zealand were under the age of 40 years.
 - ➔ A number of *established* refugees said the training they did was useful as it helped them to get a job or learn a new skill.
 - ➔ One quarter of *recently arrived* refugees interviewed at six months and one quarter of *established* refugees said they had experienced problems trying to study in New Zealand. The main problems were English language ability and cost-related.
-

11.2 CONTEXT

The Ministry of Education funds the Auckland University of Technology Centre for Refugee Education to run the education component of the on-arrival programme for refugees at the Mangere Refugee Reception Centre (Mangere). Quota refugees participate in a six-week English language and orientation to New Zealand programme. Provision is made for all levels: early childhood,

primary, secondary, and tertiary. All refugees from 13 years upwards are assessed by bilingual tutors prior to their placement in the education system.⁴⁷ Refugees aged 19 years and older may also attend secondary classes as adult students. Individual reports are provided that recommend realistic subsequent educational provision within what is available in the regions of resettlement.

Adult refugees can access a range of tertiary education opportunities tailored to suit their needs: there are Equivalent Full Time Student (EFTS) funded courses, with a number of fully-subsidised places available each year for ESOL in participating tertiary education institutions, and Training Opportunities and Youth Training, with ESOL places available for refugee jobseekers. There are also adult and community education classes, such as those delivered by community groups, schools and the National Association of ESOL Home Tutor Service.

11.3 QUALIFICATIONS BEFORE ARRIVAL AND NZQA ASSESSMENT

Refugees may experience difficulties having their qualifications recognised in New Zealand. The New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) is responsible for assessing the qualifications of people who come to New Zealand, including the qualifications of refugees. Chile (1999) notes that the NZQA and professional organisations disagree on whether to recognise some refugees' qualifications.

As noted in Chapter 3, 47 *recently arrived* and 16 *established* refugees said they had post-secondary qualifications before arriving in New Zealand. The proportion of *recently arrived* refugees with post-secondary qualifications prior to arrival ranged from 16 percent of Quota refugees to 28 percent of Family Reunion refugees and 33 percent of Convention refugees.

Those with post-secondary qualifications were asked if they had their qualifications assessed by the NZQA. Of the 47 *recently arrived* refugees interviewed at six months, 14 had their qualifications assessed by the NZQA. *Recently arrived* Quota refugees had proportionately fewer qualifications before arrival than other groups, but were more likely than other groups to get their qualifications assessed. Nine Quota refugees had their qualifications assessed compared to three Convention refugees and two Family Reunion refugees. Six of the 16 *established* refugees who had qualifications before arrival had their qualifications assessed by the NZQA.

Those who had their qualifications assessed by the NZQA were mostly happy with the assessment, with only two people at six months indicating they were not happy.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ The experiences of children and teenagers attending school are examined in Chapter 14.

⁴⁸ Of the *recently arrived* refugees interviewed at six months, one person did not respond to this question.

11.4 EDUCATION IN NEW ZEALAND

11.4.1 *Recently arrived* refugees

Research participants were asked about study or training they had done in New Zealand (excluding orientation at Mangere and any English language study). One quarter of *recently arrived* refugees at six months said they had done some study or training since arriving in New Zealand, or since having their refugee status determined (see Table 11.1).⁴⁹ A higher proportion of Quota refugees (36 percent) said they had taken part in study compared to Convention refugees (25 percent) and Family Reunion refugees (9 percent). This can be accounted for by a number of Quota refugees who included English language study when asked about study and training they had completed (see below). At two years, one quarter of participants said they had done some study or training since their last interview (ranging from 14 percent of Family Reunion refugees to 38 percent of Convention refugees).

One quarter of recently arrived refugees at six months said they had taken part in study or training in New Zealand. At two years, one quarter of participants said they had taken part in study since their last interview.

At both six months and two years, a higher proportion of participants between the ages of 17 and 24 years had completed study or training than other age groups. Forty-seven percent of the 17 to 24 year olds had completed study at six months as had 42 percent of this age group at two years. A number of individuals aged between 25 and 39 years had also completed study or training (21 percent at six months and 25 percent at two years). Only a small number of participants aged 40 years or older had taken part in study or training (7 individuals at six months and 5 individuals at two years).

At six months, 30 percent of women said they had taken part in study or training compared to 20 percent of men. At two years, there was not much difference by gender in the proportion who had taken part in study or training (22 percent of women compared to 25 percent of men).

⁴⁹ Nine Convention refugees said they had taken part in study or training before their refugee status was determined, again a number were referring to English language study.

Table 11.1 Whether recently arrived refugees had done study or training in New Zealand by refugee type and age group

Taken part in study or training	Refugee type							
	Quota		Convention (after determination)		Family Reunion		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
6 months (since arrival)								
Yes	32	36	10	25	6	9	48	24
No	57	64	30	75	61	91	148	76
Total	89	100	40	100	67	100	196	100
2 years (since last interview)								
Yes	17	24	12	38	7	14	36	24
No	54	76	20	63	43	86	117	76
Total	71	100	32	100	50	100	153	100
	Age group							
	17 to 24 years		25 to 39 years		40 to 64 years		65 years and over	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
6 months (since arrival)								
Yes	24	47	18	21	6	12	1	10
No	27	53	66	79	45	88	9	90
Total number	51	100	84	100	51	100	10	100
2 years (since last interview)								
Yes	15	42	16	25	5	11	0	0
No	21	58	49	75	39	88	8	100
Total	36	100	65	100	44	100	8	100

Note

1. At six months, three did not respond and at two years, two did not respond.
2. Does not include those 14 years or younger at six months or 16 years or younger at two years.

A number of those who were studying at six months were at secondary school (10 responses) and a number were completing a tertiary diploma (7 responses).

Of the 48 *recently arrived* refugees interviewed at six months who said they had completed study or training in New Zealand, 19 were studying ESOL or another English language course. Most of them were Quota refugees. Other common types of study at six months included secondary school (10 responses) and tertiary diplomas (7 responses). The majority of those who had completed or were studying towards a diploma were Convention refugees (often in business or computing). Most of the Family Reunion refugees who had taken part in study or training were at secondary school.

Other courses taken at six months included an architecture degree, a certificate in make-up artistry, a trade qualification and a certificate in computing. Three people said they were studying in preparation for secondary school.

Participants interviewed at six months who were studying took part in courses of various lengths (ranging from four weeks to two years). Family Reunion and

Convention refugees tended to take longer courses of study than Quota refugees, which probably reflects the English language courses taken by these refugees. Of the Quota refugees, around one third said they were studying part-time and the remainder were studying full-time. The majority of Family Reunion and Convention refugees who were taking part in study or training were doing so full-time. When asked why they chose a particular course of study, many participants interviewed at six months said to improve their English (13 responses), to get a job (11 responses) or to improve their qualifications (9 responses).

At two years, participants had taken part in a range of studies since they were last interviewed. Of the 36 individuals who said they had taken part in study or training, eight people were studying English. Six people were studying or had completed a diploma in a subject such as electrical technology, science or business, four people were at secondary school, three were completing a bachelor's degree and one a master's degree. Participants interviewed at two years mentioned a number of other courses and certificates including, automotive technology, hairdressing, a gardening and agriculture course and a driving course.

Participants who said at two years that they had only taken part in one course of study since they were last interviewed were asked why they chose the particular course. They gave a variety of reasons such as:

- to get a job (9 responses);
- for further study or to gain a New Zealand qualification (6 responses);
- because it was free (5 responses);
- because an interpreter was provided (5 responses);
- it was part of the school curriculum (5 responses); and
- to improve their English (4 responses).

11.4.2 Established refugees

Established refugees were asked about study or training they had completed in New Zealand aside from English language study or on-the-job training (see Table 11.2). Just over four in ten individuals said they had done some study or training in New Zealand.

A higher proportion of *established* refugees between the ages of 17 to 24 years had taken part in study or training than older refugees. Although, these individuals were mostly referring to secondary school (for example, a 17 year old would have been 12 years old on arrival). For those taking part in study aside from school, 35 percent of *established* refugees between the ages of 25 and 39 years had taken part in study in New Zealand, as had 26 percent of 40 to 64 year olds.

The main reasons participants at two years were studying included to get a job and to improve qualifications. A number mentioned, the course was free, an interpreter was provided or the study was part of the school curriculum.

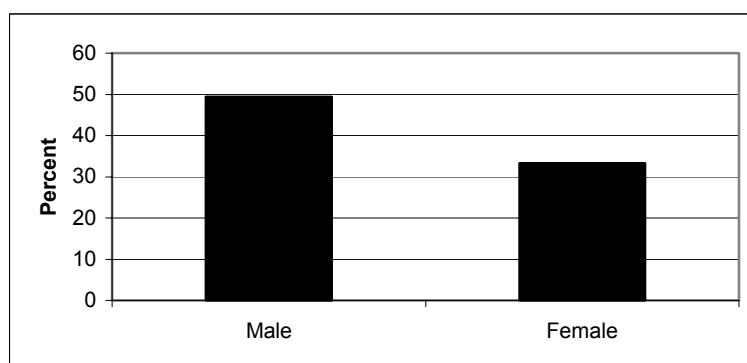
Around four in ten established refugees said they had done some study or training in New Zealand. Eighty-two percent of established refugees aged between 17 and 24 years had done some study or training.

Table 11.2 Whether established refugees had done study or training in New Zealand by age group

Study or training	Age group									
	17 to 24 years		25 to 39 years		40 to 64 years		65 years and over		Established total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Yes	31	82	27	35	14	26	0	0	72	42
No	7	18	50	65	40	74	4	100	101	58
Total	38	100	77	100	54	100	4	100	173	100

Figure 11.1 shows the proportion of *established* refugees who had completed study or training by gender. One half of men (45 individuals) had taken part in study or training in New Zealand compared to one third of women (27 individuals).

Figure 11.1 Whether established refugees had done study or training in New Zealand by gender n=173



Established refugees had taken part in a range of studies in New Zealand, such as computer studies, science degrees, business studies, chef training, automotive studies and sewing classes.

Of the 72 *established* refugees who had taken part in study or training in New Zealand, 38 individuals (between the ages of 17 and 24 years) had attended secondary school and seven had studied English. Six were taking part in computer studies and four said they were studying towards a degree in subjects including science, nursing and business. Other *established* refugees were studying towards or had completed a range of courses or certificates including a master's degree, chef training, business studies, hairdressing, accountancy, interpreting, automotive studies, welding, carpentry and sewing classes.

11.5 HOW USEFUL WAS STUDY OR TRAINING

Established refugees who had completed one or more courses of study in New Zealand were asked how useful this study was. Sixty-nine individuals responded to this question. Most of these individuals found the study very useful or useful. Three people said the study they did was of some use, while only one said a course was not useful at all.

"I have learned language and gained a lot of experience and I have got a job now."

Iraqi Quota refugee, five years

They were then asked why they found the particular course of study or training useful. Ten individuals said the course helped them get a job and ten people said the course was useful because they learnt new skills. Other reasons included the course being full-time, having good teachers or tutors, and helping with English and communication skills.

11.6 PROBLEMS EXPERIENCED TRYING TO DO STUDY OR TRAINING

Research participants were asked if they had experienced any problems finding or doing study or training in New Zealand. At six months, one quarter of *recently arrived* refugees said they had experienced problems (see Table 11.3). At two years, one in five said they had experienced problems in the past 12 months.

Of the *recently arrived* refugees, Quota refugees were the least likely to have experienced problems and Family Reunion refugees the most likely (35 percent at six months and 26 percent at two years). This likely reflects the fact that Quota refugees received more help than other groups. The proportion of men and women who had experienced problems was very similar.

Table 11.3 Whether *recently arrived* refugees had experienced problems finding or doing study or training

Problems with study or training	Refugee type							
	Quota		Convention		Family Reunion		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
6 months (since arrival)								
Yes	17	19	11	26	21	35	49	26
No	72	81	31	74	39	65	142	74
Total	89	100	42	100	60	100	191	100
2 years (in past 12 months)								
Yes	10	14	7	22	12	26	29	19
No	61	86	25	78	35	74	121	81
Total	71	100	32	100	47	100	150	100

Note

1. At six months five did not know and one did not respond. At two years, five did not know.

Table 11.4 shows the proportion of *established* refugees who had experienced problems finding or doing study or training in New Zealand. Overall, one quarter said they had experienced problems. A higher proportion of men (33 percent) than women (18 percent) said they had experienced problems.

Table 11.4 Whether *established* refugees had experienced problems with study or training by gender

Problems with study or training	Gender		
	Male	Female	Total
	%	%	%
Yes	33	18	26
No	67	82	74
Total percent	100	100	100
Total number	89	76	165

Note

1. Four did not know and four did not respond.

At six months, one quarter of *recently arrived* refugees said they had experienced problems trying to do study or training. At two years, 20 percent said they had experienced problems in the last 12 months.

One quarter of *established* refugees had experienced problems trying to do study or training. A higher proportion of men (33 percent) than women (18 percent) had experienced problems.

11.6.1 Types of problems

“My age, language problems, and transport problems.”

Iraqi Family Reunion refugee, six months

“I found a sewing course that I was interested in, but the course costs \$6000. I couldn't afford to pay for the course and WINZ [W&I] wouldn't help me pay for it.”

Iraqi Quota refugee, five years

Research participants who had experienced problems trying to access study or training were asked to describe those problems. Participants discussed similar issues at each interview (see Table 11.5). For *recently arrived* refugees interviewed at six months and *established* refugees, the most common problems were English language ability and not having the financial resources to do study. These difficulties were also noted at two years, along with health issues (including emotional problems and pregnancy) and difficulties with transport.

“Don't know, many. Before I was granted refugee status, I had no money, can't study. I can't study subjects I want to study now because of language.”

Ethiopian Convention refugee, six months

Other problems were difficulties accessing childcare or having childcare responsibilities, needing to work and not having enough time. A few people said they had literacy problems and found it difficult to take notes and a few *established* refugees said the particular course was not suited to refugees. Some individuals interviewed at six months said they had a lack of information about how to access classes or the classes were already full.

“The course provided is not well-catered for refugee mature students like me. Some teachers were not well trained on teaching different ethnic students.”

Ethiopian Quota refugee, five years

Table 11.5 Types of problems with study or training experienced by participants

Refugee type		
Recently arrived		Established
6 months (responses)	2 years (responses)	(responses)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Language difficulties (16) ▪ Financial problems (9) ▪ Difficulties accessing childcare (6) ▪ A lack of information about how to access study (5) ▪ Classes too full (5) ▪ Literacy problems as never attended school (3) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Financial problems (6) ▪ Health problems (6) ▪ Difficulties with transport (6) ▪ Language difficulties (5) ▪ Difficulties accessing childcare (3) ▪ Needing to work (3) ▪ Not having enough time (3) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Language difficulties (14) ▪ Financial problems (10) ▪ Health problems within the family (8) ▪ Child care responsibilities (7) ▪ Literacy problems (3) ▪ Course not suited to refugees (2)

Note

1. Participants could give multiple responses.

“Transportation. Once I went to a course and that was far from our house and I didn't know how to come back home and it took a long time. I was very tired when I came back home and it was late, so I decided not to go anymore.”

Afghan Family Reunion refugee, two years

“Because I have to feed the family, no one to look after them, cost [is a problem] as all money tends to go to the family.”

Ethiopian Quota refugee, two years

11.7 STUDENT LOANS

Table 11.6 shows the number of participants who applied for a student loan in New Zealand and the numbers who were successful. Of the *recently arrived* refugees interviewed at six months, nine out of 23 individuals who tried to get a loan actually received one. At two years, most of the 18 individuals who applied managed to get one. Of the *established* refugees, 24 out of 26 individuals received a student loan.

Table 11.6 Whether participants applied for and whether they received a student loan

Received a student loan	Refugee type		
	<i>Recently arrived</i>		<i>Established</i>
	6 months	2 years	
	n	n	n
Yes	9	16	24
No	23	2	2
Total	32	18	26

Participants were asked if they had experienced difficulties trying to get a student loan. At six months, seven individuals said they had experienced difficulties. The difficulties included a lack of information about how to get a loan, not having lived in New Zealand for long enough to apply and not being entitled to a student loan.

At two years, only two individuals who tried to get a student loan experienced problems. These problems included one person's application being late and one person who was told a student loan did not cover exam costs.

Two out of 26 *established* refugees had experienced difficulties getting a student loan. One person said their application was not considered and the other person did not describe the difficulty they experienced.

11.8 SUMMARY

Some of the data in this section needs to be treated with caution since several participants included English language study despite being asked to exclude this. It is possible that the requirement to exclude English language study was lost in the translation of the question in some cases. This appears to have been more of an issue at six months, perhaps indicating participants understood the question better after six months.

Forty-seven *recently arrived* and 17 *established* refugees said they had post-secondary qualifications prior to coming to New Zealand. A higher proportion of *recently arrived* Convention refugees than other participants had qualifications while Quota refugees had the least. Fourteen out of 47 *recently arrived* refugees had their qualifications assessed by the NZQA as did six out of 16 *established* refugees.

Overall, one quarter of *recently arrived* refugees interviewed at six months said they had done some study or training in New Zealand. At two years, one quarter

said they had done some study or training since their six month interview. At two years, the proportion who had done some study or training ranged from 14 percent of Family Reunion refugees to 24 percent of Quota and 38 percent of Convention refugees. Forty-two percent of *established* refugees said they had done study or training in New Zealand. More 17 to 24 years olds had taken part in study or training than older participants (often at secondary school). For *established* refugees, one half of men had taken part in study or training compared to one third of women. Participants took part in a variety of studies ranging from driving courses to diplomas in business or computer studies and degrees in science and business subjects. Common reasons for *recently arrived* refugees taking part in study or training were to get a job or to get a New Zealand qualification. Others mentioned the course was free or an interpreter was provided. The main reason *established* refugees said a particular course of study or training had been useful was it helped them to get a job.

One quarter of *recently arrived* refugees interviewed at six months and one fifth at two years said they had experienced problems finding or doing study or training. One quarter of *established* refugees had experienced difficulties. More *established* men than women said they had experienced problems while there were no gender differences for *recently arrived* refugees. The main problems noted were English language difficulties and not having the necessary finances. Others referred to a lack of childcare, health issues, and a lack of transportation. Less *established* than *recently arrived* refugees reported difficulties obtaining a student loan.

12 LABOUR FORCE AND OTHER ACTIVITIES

12.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes participants' participation in the labour force and looks at some key issues for refugees in the labour market in New Zealand. The experiences of research participants aged between 15 and 65 years who had participated in paid employment, looked for work and participated in voluntary work are then explored in more depth. The activities of those who were not involved in the labour force are also described, although these areas are explored in more depth in other chapters.

Work assists with providing independence, self esteem and social connections.

While this chapter focuses on participation in the labour market, the importance of participants' contribution in terms of cultural and social benefits and international linkages is also acknowledged. These areas are discussed in other chapters. The topics covered in this chapter include:

- some key issues with labour force participation;
- definitions used;
- paid work before determination of refugee status;
- paid work at any time in New Zealand;
- current labour force participation;
- characteristics of those currently in paid work;
- self employment;
- occupation and industry;
- satisfaction with employment;
- what helped participants find employment;
- difficulties finding paid work in New Zealand;
- looking for work;
- voluntary work; and
- other activities in New Zealand.

Key themes

- ➔ *Recently arrived* refugees had a labour force activity rate of 26 percent at six months, increasing to 33 percent at two years. The seeking work rate for these individuals was 38 percent at six months and 22 percent at two years.
- ➔ *Established* refugees had a labour force activity rate of 38 percent and a seeking work rate of 23 percent.
- ➔ Thirty *recently arrived* refugees (16 percent) were in paid employment at six months, as were 37 individuals at two years (25 percent). Forty-nine *established* refugees were working at five years (28 percent).
- ➔ Convention refugees, having spent more time in education, having more work experience and having better English language ability, were more likely than other participants to be employed. One half were working at six months and at two years. Many of these individuals were working part-time, particularly at two years.
- ➔ Of those who had looked for work, 66 percent of *recently arrived* refugees at two years and 79 percent of *established* refugees had worked at some stage

since arrival in New Zealand. This is much higher than the proportion working at each interview, indicating the type of work refugees get is not necessarily sustainable.

- Informal networks were an important source of help for participants looking for work. Over half of the *recently arrived* and *established* refugees who were working were helped into their jobs by friends and family.
 - A number of participants experienced problems obtaining paid work in New Zealand with the main difficulty being a lack of English language ability. A number of *established* refugees discussed negative responses and discrimination from employers, for example often being told recently advertised jobs had been taken.
 - Only a small number of participants at each interview indicated they were dissatisfied with their jobs. However, around one third of participants at each interview were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with their employment indicating that problems existed.
 - The main aspect that *recently arrived* refugees at six months and *established* refugees liked about their jobs was their co-workers. A number of participants disliked that their jobs lacked a career path.
-

12.2 SOME KEY ISSUES

For some refugees, finding work is a priority, while for others improving English language and continuing study is the short-term priority.

Labour force participation is an important part of resettlement and there is widespread agreement that obtaining appropriate (or any) employment is difficult for refugees. It is important to note that depending on their stage of resettlement, finding work will be a priority for some refugees while for others improving English language and continuing study will be the short term priority. For example, a group of Burmese refugees in Nelson who took part in a focus group said they were not currently looking for work as their first priority was to learn English. Other refugees will be looking after family in New Zealand while some will have trauma, physical disability or mental health issues that will prevent them from entering the labour market or mean it is not a priority. The different priorities of research participants are reflected in the activities they were doing in New Zealand at each interview (see 12.15).

English is very important. Even if we had a job, we couldn't do the job because of our English. So we want to get a benefit until we get to a reasonable level of English.

Burmese man,
focus group

Refugees' backgrounds also limit what they can do in a new country and they can face multiple barriers to entering the labour market. These barriers can include:

- a lack of New Zealand work experience;
- a lack of understanding by employers about applicants from other countries;
- a lack of New Zealand qualifications;
- limited English;
- bias or racism; and
- discrimination by recruitment consultants (Basnayake, 2000).

While some of the barriers would apply broadly to many migrants, refugee backgrounds are likely to magnify their impact. Because many jobs are not advertised, informal networks such as family and friends are often key entry points to the labour market. In a recent report looking at the experiences of

employers recruiting migrants (NZIS, 2003), finding employees through a friend or by word of mouth was the second most popular form of recruitment, with 26 percent of the employers surveyed indicating they used this method. As discussed below, an important source of assistance into paid employment for participants was family and friends. There is no refugee-specific job placement service in New Zealand, although the Department of Labour (DoL) has been funding a number of pilot projects to assist refugees and migrants to find work and refugees also use the Ministry of Social Development's Work and Income Service (W&I).⁵⁰

Many research participants came to New Zealand with the expectation that they would find work and, as discussed in Chapter 4, this is the main area where their expectations about New Zealand were not met. Several refugees who took part in focus groups commented that finding work was one of the major issues they faced in New Zealand. Service providers felt that not being able to find work was often very damaging to refugees' self esteem, especially when there was pressure to support family members overseas by sending money home.

"They come here thinking they are going to find a job and support a family, but they wind up on a benefit in a little house. Their self-esteem is already damaged. This causes it to fall through the floor."

Service provider, focus group

When interpreting the data in this chapter it is important to note the unique characteristics of Convention refugees. Compared to other participants, Convention refugees had spent more time in education, had higher qualification levels and were more likely to have worked before coming to New Zealand (see Chapter 3). Convention refugees also rated their English language ability on arrival higher than did Quota or Family Reunion refugees (see Chapter 10). Convention refugees had been in New Zealand for longer than other participants while waiting for their refugee status to be determined. They may also have been more motivated than other participants to find work, since as asylum seekers they have access to a work permit on arrival to allow them to find work and support themselves. Asylum seekers whose claims have not yet been determined may be granted an emergency unemployment benefit if they cannot find work.

Another important point relating to Convention refugees is that 26 of the 42 individuals interviewed at six months were from Sri Lanka (see Chapter 2). Because more than two thirds of Convention refugees were Sri Lankan, it is difficult to know whether particular findings are attributable to the characteristics of Convention refugees or the characteristics of Sri Lankans. Where appropriate the data is disaggregated to compare the characteristics of Sri Lankan (South Asian) participants with those from other regions.

12.3 DEFINITIONS

The definitions for labour force activity rates and seeking work rates used in this report differ from the standard International Labour Organisation definitions for labour force participation and unemployment rates. The terms used here are defined as follows:

⁵⁰ Two of these pilots, Wellington ESOL Home Tutor Service and the RMS (Christchurch), had refugees as their main client group.

Labour force activity rate: the proportion of participants who were working (for pay or without pay in a family business or farm) or looking for work out of the total, excluding those who did not know or did not respond.

Seeking work rate: the proportion of participants who were looking for work (and who were not currently working) out of all those in the labour force (i.e. out of those who were working or looking for work).

12.4 PAID WORK BEFORE DETERMINATION OF REFUGEE STATUS

Asylum seekers generally have access to a work permit and are able to work in New Zealand while they are waiting for determination of their refugee status. Convention refugees who participated in this research were asked if they took part in paid work during the time they were awaiting determination (see Table 12.1).

Forty Convention refugees responded to this question and, of these, 16 had worked in New Zealand before their refugee status was determined. Most of these individuals were men. The main occupations that these individuals worked in were service and sales (6 individuals) and elementary occupations, such as cleaning (5 individuals).

Table 12.1 Whether asylum seekers worked in New Zealand before their refugee status was determined

Worked before refugee status determined	Male	Female	Total
	n	n	n
Yes	13	3	16
No	16	8	24
Total	29	11	40

Note

1. Two did not respond.
2. Does not include those 14 years or younger or 65 years or older.

12.5 PAID WORK AT ANY TIME IN NEW ZEALAND

One way of looking at the labour market experiences of refugees is to ascertain if they have ever been in paid work in New Zealand. The figures presented in this section differ from those in Sections 12.6 to 12.10 that focus on current labour force activity.

Participants who had looked for work in New Zealand were asked whether they had been in paid work at any time since arrival in New Zealand (see Table 12.2).⁵¹ Of the 80 *recently arrived* refugees interviewed at two years who had looked for work, 66 percent indicated that they had been in work at some stage. A high proportion of Convention refugees who had looked for work had been in paid employment (86 percent), compared to 46 percent of Quota refugees and 65 percent of Family Reunion refugees. Of the 110 *established* refugees who had looked for employment in New Zealand, 79 percent had worked at some stage. These figures are substantially higher than those who were currently employed at

⁵¹ *Recently arrived* refugees at six months were not asked this question.

Sixteen out of 40 recently arrived Convention refugees had worked in New Zealand while waiting for determination of their refugee status.

each interview date (see Section 12.6) indicating that participants do get work, although not necessarily sustainable employment. For example, seasonal fruit picking is an important source of work in some communities.

Table 12.2 Paid work at some time since arrival in New Zealand

Paid work since arrival	Refugee type									
	Recently arrived (2 years)								Established	
	Quota		Convention		Family Reunion		Total		n	%
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Yes	12	46	24	86	17	65	53	66	87	79
No	14	54	4	14	9	35	27	34	23	21
Total	26	100	28	100	26	100	80	100	110	100

Note

1. Only includes those participants who had looked for work.
2. At two years, one did not know.
3. Does not include those 14 years or younger for the *recently arrived* refugees or 16 years or younger for the *established* refugees. Does not include those 65 years or older.

Table 12.3 shows the proportion of participants who had done paid work at some stage since arrival in New Zealand by gender. Of the *recently arrived* refugees interviewed at two years, 72 percent of men compared to 56 percent of women had worked at some stage since arrival. Of the *established* refugees, slightly more women (85 percent) than men (76 percent) had done some paid work since arrival.

Table 12.3 Paid work at some time since arrival in New Zealand by gender

Paid work since arrival	Refugee type							
	Recently arrived (2 years)				Established			
	Male		Female		Male		Female	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Yes	38	72	15	56	54	76	33	85
No	15	28	12	44	17	24	6	15
Total	53	100	27	100	71	100	39	100

Note

1. Only includes those participants who had looked for work.
2. At two years, one did not know.
3. Does not include those 14 years or younger for the *recently arrived* refugees or 16 years or younger for the *established* refugees. Does not include those 65 years or older.

12.5.1 Whether participants were still in their first job

Table 12.4 shows the proportion of participants who had worked in New Zealand and who were still in their first job. Of the 53 *recently arrived* refugees who had worked in New Zealand, just over one half (29 people) were still in the same job at two years. Of the *established* refugees, nearly 30 percent (24 people) were still in their first job. A similar proportion of men and women in each group were still in their first job (although this is not shown below).

Table 12.4 Whether participants who had worked at some time in New Zealand were still in their first job

Still in first job	Refugee type			
	Recently arrived (2 years)		Established	
	n	%	n	%
Yes	29	55	24	28
No	24	45	62	72
Total	53	100	86	100

Note

1. Of the *established* refugees, one person did not respond.
2. Does not include those 14 years or younger for the *recently arrived* refugees or 16 years or younger for the *established* refugees. Does not include those 65 years or older.

12.6 CURRENT LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION

In this section of the report, labour force activity is a hierarchical classification and a participant can only be classified as doing one thing at a time. This is consistent with the classification used for Statistics New Zealand's Survey of Family, Income and Employment (SOFIE). This means the numbers presented in this section differ from those reported in other parts of the chapter that include multiple responses. The hierarchy of activities and associated labour force classifications are shown in Table 12.5.

Table 12.5 Labour market activity and classification

Labour market activity	Labour force classification
1. Paid work	Working
2. Unpaid work (in a family business or farm)	Working
3. Looking for work	Looking for work
4. Other activity	Other activity

If, for example, a participant was in paid work of any kind and they were also looking for work, they were classified as working. However, all individuals who were looking for work (or involved in other activities) were identified in the questionnaire and this information is presented later in this chapter.

12.6.1 Recently arrived refugees

Table 12.6 shows the labour force activity of *recently arrived* refugees in the seven days prior to being interviewed. Overall, 16 percent of participants were working at six months (including two individuals working without pay) and 26 percent were working at two years. A much higher proportion of Convention refugees than Quota or Family Reunion refugees were working. Just over half of the 42 Convention refugees were working at six months and a similar proportion were working at two years. Four out of 89 Quota refugees were working at six months, increasing to nine out of 73 individuals at two years. The corresponding figures for Family Reunion refugees were five out of 58 individuals working at six months, increasing to 12 out of 42 working at two years.

Convention refugees also had a much higher labour force activity rate than other participants at both interviews. At six months, the labour force activity rate for Convention refugees was 69 percent (29 out of 42 participants) compared to 13 percent for Quota refugees (12 out of 89 participants) and 16 percent for Family

Reunion refugees (9 out of 58 participants). At two years, the labour force activity rates for Convention and Quota refugees were not much different from at six months. The labour force activity rate for Family Reunion refugees had increased from 16 percent at six months to 36 percent (15 out of 42 individuals) at two years. At six months, the seeking work rate for *recently arrived* refugees was 38 percent, decreasing to 22 percent at two years.

At both interviews, a substantial proportion of participants were involved in other activities outside of the labour force (74 percent at six months and 67 percent at two years). These activities are described below in Table 12.24 and are explored in more detail in other chapters.

Fifty-three percent of the 30 refugees from South Asia (Sri Lanka) were working at six months. All of the 16 refugees from Sri Lanka who were working were Convention refugees. At two years, 15 out of the 25 refugees from Sri Lanka were working, including 14 Convention refugees and one Family Reunion refugee. Participants from Sri Lanka had a comparatively high labour force activity rate of 73 percent (22 out of 30 individuals) at six months and 80 percent (20 out of 25 individuals) at two years.

Patterns in labour force activity were similar for participants from the Middle East and the Horn of Africa. At six months, participants from the Middle East had a labour force activity rate of 19 percent (19 out of 99 individuals) and this increased slightly to 24 percent (18 out of 74 individuals) at two years. The corresponding figures for participants from the Horn of Africa were 19 percent (8 out of 42 individuals) at six months and 30 percent (9 out of 30 individuals) at two years.

None of the 18 refugees from South East Asia were working at six months, although one individual was looking for work. At two years, one South East Asian was working and one was looking for work. Nearly nine in ten participants from South East Asia were involved in activities outside of the labour force (see Table 12.24 for a breakdown of these activities).

Table 12.6 Labour force activity in past seven days for recently arrived refugees by refugee type and region

Labour force activity	Refugee type							
	Quota		Convention		Family Reunion		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
6 months								
Working	4	4	22	52	5	9	31	16
Looking for work	8	9	7	17	4	7	19	10
Other activity	77	87	13	31	49	84	139	74
Total	89	100	42	100	58	100	189	100
Lf activity rate (%)		13		69		16		26
Seeking work rate (%)		67		24		44		38
2 years								
Working	9	12	17	53	12	29	38	26
Looking for work	3	4	5	16	3	7	11	7
Other activity	61	84	10	31	27	64	98	67
Total	73	100	32	100	42	100	147	100
Lf activity rate (%)		16		69		36		33
Seeking work rate (%)		25		23		20		22
Labour force activity	Region of origin							
	Middle East		Horn of Africa		South Asia		South East Asia	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
6 months								
Working	11	11	4	10	16	53	0	0
Looking for work	8	8	4	10	6	20	1	6
Other activity	80	81	34	81	8	27	17	94
Total	99	100	42	100	30	100	18	100
Lf activity rate (%)		19		19		73		6
Seeking work rate (%)		42		50		27		100
2 years								
Working	15	20	7	23	15	60	1	6
Looking for work	3	4	2	7	5	20	1	6
Other activity	56	76	21	70	5	20	16	89
Total	74	100	30	100	25	100	18	100
Lf activity rate (%)		24		30		80		11
Seeking work rate (%)		17		22		25		50

Note

1. At six months, one did not know. At six months, two individuals were working without pay.
2. Does not include those 14 years or younger or 65 years or older.
3. The labour force activity rate is the proportion of those who were working or looking for work out of all participants. The seeking work rate is the proportion of those who were looking for work out of all those in the labour force (i.e. out of those working and looking for work).

As is shown in Table 12.7, there were differences in labour force activity by gender. At six months, 26 percent of the 98 men were working compared to 7 percent of the 91 women. At two years, 35 percent of the 77 men were working compared to 16 percent of 70 women. At six months, men had a labour force activity rate of 38 percent, increasing to 47 percent at two years. Women had a labour force activity rate of 14 percent at six months and 19 percent at two years.

Closer analysis shows the gender differences at six months were mostly accounted for by Convention refugees. Of the six women who were working at six months, five were Convention refugees and one was a Family Reunion refugee (who was working without pay). Of the 25 men who were working at six months, 16 were Convention refugees.

At two years, a small number of women from all refugee groups were working (including three Convention, four Quota and four Family Reunion refugees). The 27 male refugees who were working at two years included 14 Convention, eight Family Reunion and five Quota refugees.

Table 12.7 Labour force activity in the past seven days for recently arrived refugees by gender

Labour force activity	Gender			
	Male		Female	
	n	%	n	%
6 months				
Working	25	26	6	7
Looking for work	12	12	7	8
Other activity	61	62	78	86
Total	98	100	91	100
Lf activity rate (%)		38		14
Seeking work rate (%)		32		54
2 years				
Working	27	35	11	16
Looking for work	9	12	2	3
Other activity	41	53	57	81
Total	77	100	70	100
Lf activity rate (%)		47		19
Seeking work rate (%)		25		15

Note

1. At six months, one did not know and two individuals were working without pay.
2. Does not include those 14 years or younger or 65 years or older.
3. The labour force activity rate is the proportion of those who were working or looking for work out of all participants. The seeking work rate is the proportion of those who were looking for work out of all those in the labour force (i.e. out of those working and looking for work).

12.6.2 Established refugees

The labour force activity of *established* refugees in the seven days prior to being interviewed is shown in Table 12.8 below. Fifty-one out of the 173 participants (29 percent) were working and 15 (9 percent) were looking for work. *Established* refugees had a labour force activity rate of 38 percent and a seeking work rate of 23 percent.

Differences in labour force activity were also evident by gender for *established* refugees. Forty percent of the 90 men were working compared to 18 percent of the 83 women. More men than women were looking for work (13 and 4 percent respectively). Men had a labour force activity rate of 53 percent compared to 22 percent for women.

Table 12.8 Labour force activity in the past seven days for established refugees by gender

Labour force activity	Gender					
	Male		Female		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Working	36	40	15	18	51	29
Looking for work	12	13	3	4	15	9
Other activity	42	47	65	78	107	62
Total	90	100	83	100	173	100
Lf activity rate (%)		53		22		38
Seeking work rate (%)		25		17		23

Note

1. Two did not respond.
2. Does not include those 16 years or younger or 65 years or older.
3. The labour force activity rate is the proportion of those who were working or looking for work out of all participants. The seeking work rate is the proportion of those who were looking for work out of all those in the labour force (i.e. out of those working and looking for work).

When *established* refugees' labour force activity is examined by region of origin, a similar pattern is apparent as for *recently arrived* refugees (see Table 12.9). Participants from South Asia (Sri Lanka) had the highest labour force activity rate of 58 percent (7 out of 12 participants). None of these participants were looking for work.

Participants from the Middle East and the Horn of Africa had similar labour force activity patterns. Of the 68 refugees from the Middle East, 17 were working and nine were looking for work. Of the 82 participants from the Horn of Africa, 25 were working and six were looking for work. Only two participants from South East Asia were working.

Table 12.9 Labour force activity in the past seven days for established refugees by region

Labour force activity	Region of origin							
	Middle East		Horn of Africa		South Asia		South East Asia	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Working	17	25	25	30	7	58	2	18
Looking for work	9	13	6	7	0	0	0	0
Other activity	42	62	51	62	5	42	9	82
Total	68	100	82	100	12	100	11	100
Lf activity rate (%)		38		38		58		18
Seeking work rate (%)		35		19		0		0

Note

1. Two did not respond.
2. One individual was working without pay.
3. Does not include those 16 years or younger or 65 years or older.
4. The labour force activity rate is the proportion of those who were working or looking for work out of all participants. The seeking work rate is the proportion of those who were looking for work out of all those in the labour force (i.e. out of those working and looking for work).

12.7 CHARACTERISTICS OF THOSE CURRENTLY IN PAID WORK

Table 12.10 shows the numbers of *recently arrived* refugees who had worked in the seven days prior to each interview by whether they were working part-time or full-time. These numbers vary slightly from those in Table 12.6 which includes those who were working without pay. At six months, half of those employed

were working part-time and half were working full-time, while at two years more than twice as many participants were working part-time as were working full-time. On the surface this appears to be a negative finding, however, part-time work is often more desirable than full-time work for refugees. The type of work that is often available to refugees does not pay much more than the unemployment benefit. Refugees can be nervous about moving off the benefit and wary of problems having it reinstated if need be. Therefore, working part-time and not earning over a certain threshold means they can continue to receive the benefit.

At six months, 16 percent of recently arrived refugees were in either full-time or part-time employment. At two years, 25 percent were employed and many of these individuals were working part-time.

While Convention refugees had the highest rate in work (with half working at both six months and two years) it is worth noting that a number of these were working part-time. Eleven out of 21 Convention refugees were working part-time at six months as were 11 out of 16 at two years. The number of Convention refugees working full-time decreased from ten at six months to five at two years. Chapter 13 shows that a number of participants were supplementing their income with a government benefit.

Table 12.10 Current employment in the past seven days for recently arrived refugees by part-time and full-time status

Working part-time or full-time	Refugee type							
	Quota		Convention		Family Reunion		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
6 months								
Not working	85	96	20	49	52	91	157	84
Part-time	3	3	11	27	2	4	16	9
Full-time	1	1	10	24	3	5	14	7
Total working	4	4	21	51	5	9	30	16
Total number	89	100	41	100	57	100	187	100
2 years								
Not working	64	88	16	50	30	71	110	75
Part-time	8	11	11	34	7	17	26	18
Full-time	1	1	5	16	5	12	11	7
Total working	9	12	16	50	12	29	37	25
Total number	73	100	32	100	42	100	147	100

Note

1. Does not include those 14 years or younger or 65 years or older.
2. Does not include those who were working without pay.

A higher proportion of *recently arrived* refugees living in Auckland were in work than those outside of Auckland (Table 12.11). Twenty-three percent of participants living in Auckland were working at six months as were 30 percent at two years. The corresponding figures for *recently arrived* refugees living outside Auckland were 4 percent at six months and 16 percent at two years. Again, this difference is mostly due to the number of Convention refugees living in Auckland. At six months, 18 of the 26 refugees working in Auckland were Convention refugees. At two years, 16 of the 30 working in Auckland were Convention refugees, nine were Family Reunion refugees and five were Quota refugees. The job market in Auckland is more diverse than in other urban regions.

Table 12.11 Current employment in the past seven days for *recently arrived* refugees in Auckland and outside Auckland

Working part-time or full-time	Urban region			
	Auckland	Outside Auckland	Auckland	Outside Auckland
	6 months %		2 years %	
Not working	77	96	69	85
Part-time	13	1	23	8
Full-time	10	3	7	8
Total percent working	23	4	30	16
Total	115	72	95	52

Note

1. Does not include those 14 years or younger or 65 years or older.
2. Does not include those who were working without pay.

Of the 49 *established* refugees who were working, 19 were in part-time work and 30 people were full-time (Table 12.12). The proportion employed in and outside of Auckland was very similar so is not shown here.

Table 12.12 Current employment in the past seven days for *established* refugees by part-time and full-time status

Working part-time or full-time	Total	
	n	%
Not working	124	72
Part-time	19	11
Full-time	30	17
Total working	49	28
Total	173	100

Note

1. Does not include those 16 years or younger or 65 years or older.
2. Does not include those who were working without pay.

12.8 SELF EMPLOYMENT

A small number of participants were self employed.⁵² Of the *recently arrived* refugees interviewed at six months, one Convention refugee was self employed. At two years, four Convention refugees and one Family Reunion refugee had been self employed during the past year. Of the *established* refugees, five had been self employed during the previous year. Of those who were self employed, one *recently arrived* refugee at two years indicated they employed other people.

12.9 OCCUPATION AND INDUSTRY

12.9.1 Occupation

Table 12.13 shows the occupations of those participants who were working. The most common occupational grouping for *recently arrived* refugees was service and sales. Fifteen refugees interviewed at six months and 18 at two years were

⁵² *Recently arrived* refugees at six months were asked whether they were self employed in the 14 days prior to being interviewed. *Recently arrived* refugees at two years and *established* refugees were asked whether they had been self employed during the past year.

The most common occupational grouping for *recently arrived* and *established* refugees was service and sales.

service and sales workers (often in a supermarket). At six months, four people were working in elementary occupations and this increased to eight people at two years. Many of those working in elementary occupations were cleaners.

Of the *established* refugees, 17 were service and sales workers (in supermarkets, petrol stations, as taxi drivers and caregivers) and 12 were working in elementary occupations (often as cleaners). Five were working as plant and machine operators and assemblers, and four were working in a trade.

Table 12.13 Main occupation of *recently arrived* and *established* refugees

Occupation	Refugee type		
	<i>Recently arrived</i>		<i>Established</i>
	6 months	2 years	
	n	n	n
Service and sales workers	15	18	17
Elementary occupations	4	8	12
Trades workers	4	1	4
Professionals	1	1	3
Technicians and associate professionals	1	5	2
Clerks	1	1	4
Legislators, administrators and managers	0	0	1
Agriculture and fishery workers	0	0	1
Plant and machine operators and assemblers	0	2	5
Total number	26	36	49

Note

1. At six months, four did not respond. At two years, one did not respond.
2. Does not include those 14 years or younger for the *recently arrived* refugees or 16 years or younger for the *established* refugees. Does not include those 65 years or older.

12.9.2 Industry

Table 12.14 shows the industries in which participants were employed. For *recently arrived* refugees, the most common industry was the retail trade. Fifteen people interviewed at six months were working in the retail trade as were 14 people at two years. At two years, seven *recently arrived* refugees were working in the accommodation, cafes and restaurants industry, five were working in property and business services (mostly as cleaners) and four were working in health and community services.

Established refugees were working in a range of industries, with the retail trade and manufacturing being the most common (10 and 9 people respectively). Seven *established* refugees were working in health and community services and six were working in the accommodation, cafes and restaurants grouping and property and business services.

Table 12.14 Industry worked in by *recently arrived* and *established* refugees

Industry	Refugee type		
	Recently arrived		Established
	6 months n	2 years n	
Retail trade	15	14	10
Accommodation, cafes and restaurants	3	7	6
Manufacturing	3	1	9
Property and business services	3	5	6
Construction	1	0	1
Health and community services	1	4	7
Personal and other services	1	3	0
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	0	0	1
Communication services	0	0	1
Education	0	2	3
Transport and storage	0	1	4
Government, administration and defence	0	0	1
Total number	27	37	49

Note

1. At six months, three did not respond.
2. Does not include those 14 years or younger for the *recently arrived* refugees or 16 years or younger for the *established* refugees. Does not include those 65 years or older.

12.9.3 Prior employment and current employment

Only a few participants worked in an occupation similar to their occupation before coming to New Zealand.

Chapter 3 describes the occupations of participants before coming to New Zealand. Of the 118 *recently arrived* refugees who had prior work experience, 25 percent were trade workers, 20 percent were professionals and 17 percent were service and sales workers. Of the 96 *established* refugees who had worked, 23 percent were service and sales workers and 21 percent were trade workers before coming to New Zealand.

Most participants who were employed in the seven days prior to each interview were working in an occupation that differed from the main job they had before coming to New Zealand. Of the *recently arrived* refugees, only one individual (out of 26) was working in the same occupational category as before arriving in New Zealand (this person was a professional). At two years, three people were working in the same occupation as before coming to New Zealand (including a service and sales worker, a technician and associate professional, and a professional).

Only six out of 49 *established* refugees had a current occupation in the same category as their former occupation. Three of these individuals worked in a trade, one was in service and sales, one worked as a clerk and one as a plant and machinery operator.

It is possible that participants experienced difficulties having their professional qualifications recognised in New Zealand. Also, many participants worked in a trade before coming to New Zealand. Some of these trades are commonly practised in New Zealand (such as carpenters, mechanics, electricians and painters) while others (such as a goldsmith, a dressmaker and a shoemaker) are not common in New Zealand.

12.10 SATISFACTION WITH EMPLOYMENT

Research participants who had worked in the seven days prior to being interviewed were asked how satisfied they were with their main job (Table 12.15). Of the *recently arrived* refugees, more than half were satisfied with their main job at six months (15 out of 27 people) and at two years (24 out of 37 people). Four people at six months and two people at two years were dissatisfied with their main job, while 30 percent at both interviews were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.

Of those who were working, three in ten participants at each interview were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with their job.

Of the 48 *established* refugees who were employed, around seven in ten were satisfied with their main job, while only one person mentioned they were dissatisfied. Fourteen people were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.

Table 12.15 Satisfaction with main job

Satisfaction with job	Refugee type					
	Recently arrived				Established	
	6 months		2 years		n	%
	n	%	n	%		
Satisfied	15	56	24	65	33	69
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	8	30	11	30	14	29
Dissatisfied	4	15	2	5	1	2
Total	27	100	37	100	48	100

Note

1. Of the *recently arrived* refugees interviewed at six months, three did not respond. Of the *established* refugees, one did not respond.
2. Does not include those 14 years or younger for the *recently arrived* refugees or 16 years or younger for the *established* refugees. Does not include those 65 years or older.

12.10.1 What participants liked about their jobs

What participants liked about their jobs were their fellow employees, having money or being well paid and having the opportunity to practise speaking English (see Table 12.16). A smaller number said that their job was a good career and they liked using their skills and experience and having the opportunity to gain new skills. This is likely to be a reflection of the type of work they were doing (mainly in service and sales and elementary occupations).

“Competitive pay, suitable working hours, customer service experience, improvement to my English knowledge.”

Sri Lankan
Convention refugee,
two years

“...I feel secure and happy to use my English. All respect me, especially my employer.”

Iraqi Quota refugee, two years

Further comments included having good working hours and the good attitude from employers. A number of *established* refugees said they were happy with their jobs overall.

“... There is some English use. The employers and almost all fellow workers are very friendly and respect me.”

Iraqi Quota
refugee, five
years

Table 12.16 What participants liked about their jobs

Refugee type		
Recently arrived		Established
6 months (responses)	2 years (responses)	(responses)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Fellow employees (13) ▪ Earning money (10) ▪ Opportunity to practise speaking English (9) ▪ Using skills and experience (6) ▪ Security (5) ▪ Gaining experience (4) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Opportunity to improve English (19) ▪ Pay rate (19) ▪ Gaining experience (15) ▪ Suitable hours (14) ▪ Attitude of co-workers and employers (11) ▪ Job satisfaction (10) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Co-workers (20) ▪ Opportunity to practise English (17) ▪ Well paid (16) ▪ Overall happy with the job (11) ▪ Suitable hours (10) ▪ Attitude of employer (10) ▪ Able to learn on the job (8) ▪ Good career (8) ▪ Experience and qualifications recognised (6)

Note

1. Participants could give multiple responses.

“Career path, job satisfaction and the attitudes of my fellow workers and employer.”

Ethiopian Quota refugee, five years

The comments from participants indicated there are many benefits to being in the workforce. Some of the service providers who took part in focus groups felt there was often a staircase effect for refugees once employed, where they progressed to more satisfactory and better paying jobs.

“There was one man who was desperate to find a job. We got him a paying job and he was happy there. He has finally left there and I found out this week that he’s now working for a builder and the builder hasn’t seen anything like him. He’s become well known in a short space of time. He lives in a house with five other refugees and they have established very fine work records down there. Those six men were all positive from the outset that they didn’t want to go on the benefit!”

Service provider, focus group

12.10.2 What participants disliked about their jobs

Participants were asked what aspects of their employment they did not like. The responses were similar at each interview, with the main areas being low pay and the lack of career path and/or job satisfaction (see Table 12.17). Some people mentioned they had health and safety concerns about their job.

“There is a lack of job satisfaction, no career path.”

Iraqi Quota refugee, five years

Six *established* refugees talked about negative interactions with co-workers or customers including the attitudes of colleagues, contact with ‘bad characters’ and instances of discrimination.

Many participants were concerned their jobs lacked a career path.

“... I know this is not the best job for my future.”

Afghan Family Reunion refugee, two years

Table 12.17 What participants disliked about their jobs

Refugee type		
Recently arrived		Established (responses)
6 months (responses)	2 years (responses)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Low pay (13) ▪ No career path (11) ▪ Lack of job satisfaction (7) ▪ Health and safety concerns (5) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No career path (20) ▪ Not enough hours or pay (12) ▪ Lack of security (5) ▪ Aspects of job did not suit (4) ▪ Not able to use qualifications and experience (3) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Low pay (16) ▪ No career path (12) ▪ Lack of job satisfaction (6) ▪ Negative interactions with co-workers (6) ▪ Not enough hours (5) ▪ Job not good for health (3)

“Lots of questions about where I come from, some discrimination from customers.”

Ethiopian Quota refugee, five years

Note

1. Participants could give multiple responses.

12.11 WHAT HELPED PARTICIPANTS FIND EMPLOYMENT

The 30 *recently arrived* refugees who were working at six months were asked how they found their main job and what helped them to get this job. More than half found their job through family and friends (16 responses), while six people applied for an advertised job. Two people interviewed at six months contacted an employer directly. In terms of what helped them secure employment, skills and experience were important (10 responses), followed by friends and family (8 responses) and knowing someone within an organisation (4 responses).

At two years, 37 *recently arrived* refugees were working and over half of this group were helped by friends and family to find their job. Other people who provided assistance with finding work included non-government organisations (NGOs), agencies and training providers (8 responses).

“My brother was working there and introduced me to the employer.”

Sri Lankan Family Reunion refugee, two years

Participants at two years commented that personal effort had helped them secure a job (9 responses) or their improved English language ability had helped (8 responses). Six individuals said they had the necessary skills and qualifications, while another five said they had previous experience in the particular work.

Eighty-seven *established* refugees had worked in paid employment in New Zealand at some time or were currently employed in New Zealand. Again, family, friends and community played an important part in helping these participants find work (45 responses).

“Somali friends who were in that company helped me get the job.”

Somali Quota refugee, five years

“I was looking for a job and my friend helped me, and I found this job.”

Iranian Quota refugee, five years

Other things that helped *established* refugees find paid work were English language skills (8 responses), qualifications or training (6 responses) and experience (5 responses). Participants’ English language ability and participation in study and training are discussed in Chapters 10 and 11.

Around two thirds of *recently arrived* refugees at two years who had looked for work had experienced difficulties with finding work. Around eight out of ten Quota and Family Reunion refugees experienced difficulties.

12.12 DIFFICULTIES GETTING PAID WORK IN NEW ZEALAND

Research participants were asked about difficulties they had experienced looking for paid work in New Zealand. Just under half of *recently arrived* refugees at six months indicated they had experienced difficulties finding paid work in New Zealand (Table 12.18). Those who said they had the most difficulty were Convention refugees (68 percent). Forty-nine percent of Family Reunion refugees had experienced difficulties while Quota refugees had the least difficulty (37 percent). Quota and Family Reunion refugees were less likely than Convention refugees to be working or looking for work at six months (see Table 12.6 above) which would account for why they had fewer problems.

At two years, the 81 *recently arrived* refugees who said they had looked for paid work since arriving in New Zealand were asked if they experienced difficulties. Sixty-nine percent had experienced difficulties. High proportions of Family Reunion and Quota refugees who had looked for work had experienced difficulties (85 percent and 77 percent respectively), while just under half of Convention refugees indicated they had experienced difficulties.

Table 12.18 Whether *recently arrived* refugees had difficulties finding paid work in New Zealand

Difficulties finding work	Refugee type							
	Quota		Convention		Family Reunion		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
6 months								
Yes	32	37	28	68	28	49	88	48
No	55	63	13	32	29	51	97	52
Total	87	100	41	100	57	100	185	100
2 years								
Yes	20	77	13	46	23	85	56	69
No	6	23	15	54	4	15	25	31
Total	26	100	28	100	27	100	81	100

Note

1. At six months, all participants were asked whether they had experienced difficulties getting paid work in New Zealand, while at two years only those who had looked for paid work were asked this question.
2. At six months, four did not respond.
3. Does not include those 14 years or younger or 65 years or older.

“My main problem is language. I tried to apply for jobs when I saw them in newspapers. When I called, they did not understand what I was talking about.”

Burmese Quota refugee, two years

Difficulty with English language was the main reason *recently arrived* refugees interviewed at six months and at two years had problems finding paid work in New Zealand (59 responses and 31 responses respectively). Quota and Family Reunion were more likely than Convention refugees to give this reason. Other difficulties at six months included a lack of work experience, particularly in New Zealand (30 responses), a lack of transport (9 responses), health problems (8 responses) and a lack of New Zealand qualifications (8 responses). Many Convention refugees said the difficulty they experienced was a lack of New Zealand experience. No Convention refugees gave lack of transport or health problems as a reason.

At two years, a number of people commented that a lack of New Zealand qualifications, skills and experience (14 responses) made it difficult to get work. A number felt there was a lack of job opportunities (12 responses). A smaller

number said that they did not have the necessary job search skills or appropriate contacts to get work. Three people discussed negative responses from employers, such as employers not returning phone calls.

“It’s hard to get a job here, employers tell you that they will phone you, but they never do. Employers won’t give you the job.”

Somali Quota refugee, two years

Of the 109 *established* refugees who had looked for work in New Zealand, seven in ten had experienced difficulties (Table 12.19). A slightly higher proportion of men than women experienced difficulties (73 percent compared to 64 percent).

Seven in ten established refugees had experienced difficulties getting paid work in New Zealand. Difficulty with English was the main problem, followed by a lack of work experience.

The most common difficulties mentioned were English language problems (30 responses) and lack of work experience (22 responses), in particular New Zealand work experience. Migrants, in general, may face similar issues finding work in New Zealand. For example, recent research found that, among other things, work experience and English language ability were important attributes that employers looked for when employing migrants (NZIS, 2003).

“Lack of New Zealand experience was the main problem in getting a job.”

Sri Lankan Quota refugee, five years

Table 12.19 Whether established refugees had difficulties getting paid work in New Zealand

Difficulties getting work	Gender		
	Male	Female	Total
	%	%	%
Yes	73	64	70
No	27	36	30
Total percent	100	100	100
Total	70	39	109

Note

1. Only includes *established* refugees who had looked for work in New Zealand.
2. One did not respond.
3. Does not include those 16 years or younger or 65 years or older.

Established refugees discussed negative responses from employers (14 responses) and discrimination from employers (10 responses). Examples included often being told recently advertised jobs had been taken, potential employers not returning phone calls or not informing participants of the outcome of job interviews. While this may not always be discrimination, refugees may view such responses as discrimination if they occur regularly. The research associates felt discrimination was an issue for refugees looking for work in New Zealand. They specifically mentioned discrimination against women from certain cultures because of the way they dress, as well as several instances of employers telling refugees a position had been taken when it had only just been advertised. Chile (2002, p. 362) discusses difficulties for Black African refugees, particularly women, accessing employment in New Zealand because of discrimination.

“I look in a newspaper and find a job several times. When I call, the employer says we will call you back. Unfortunately, none of them have called me back. I believe that I am the second culture.”

Ethiopian Quota refugee, five years

“Whenever I applied for a job I'd get declined. They'd say there's no vacancy.”

Iraqi Quota refugee, five years

Another difficulty was a lack of qualifications (11 responses). Six people mentioned problems with childcare or having to look after sick family members.

12.12.1 Findings from focus groups

Women who took part in focus groups discussed difficulties they experienced finding work in New Zealand. For a group of Iranian women, these difficulties often related to English language ability. These women had many years of work experience in professions such as teaching and accountancy (in some cases, more than 20 years experience). A group of Somali women, who were mostly single mothers with several children, found it difficult to find work within school hours. A group of service providers felt that a difficulty refugees often faced was that they did not have the equipment (or money for equipment) that was necessary for some jobs. Also, training was now being required for many lower skilled jobs in New Zealand and employers were giving precedence to people with qualifications. Service providers felt this training was often not necessary.

“To work in a factory they need boots etc. They don't have the equipment and they don't have the money to buy it. Or they need a certificate in cleaning windows properly...It's nonsense! A person of reasonable intelligence can clean a window, or they can learn to clean a window themselves, and that needs to be respected.”

Service provider, focus group

12.13 LOOKING FOR WORK

At six months, 19 percent of recently arrived refugees were looking for work and at two years 24 percent were looking for work. A number of these people were already in paid employment.

To examine in more detail the experiences of refugees looking for work in New Zealand, participants were asked if they had looked for paid work in the four weeks prior to each interview.⁵³ Of the *recently arrived* refugees, 19 percent interviewed at six months and 24 percent at two years indicated that they had looked for work in the past month (Table 12.20). A number of the participants who were looking for work were already in paid employment (10 at six months and 14 at two years).⁵⁴

Convention refugees were most likely to be looking for work, with one third looking for work at both interviews. The proportion of Family Reunion refugees looking for work increased from 14 percent at six months to 38 percent at two years. The proportion of Quota refugees looking for work decreased from 15 percent at six months to 10 percent at two years. Perhaps after two years, some Quota refugees had realised they needed to improve their English language ability or do other study before entering the job market. Many of those not looking for paid work were engaged in other activities such as studying English, looking after children and settling into life in New Zealand (see Table 12.24).

⁵³ The experiences of refugees on the unemployment benefit are explored in more detail in Chapter 13.

⁵⁴ The figures in this section differ from the 'looking for work' figures in Table 12.6 that relate to the seven days prior to each interview.

Recently arrived refugees indicated they were looking for work in a range of professions. Some of the jobs mentioned were: factory work, supermarket work, cleaning, or kitchen-hand work. Some mentioned more specialised jobs, such as a teacher, a jeweller, an IT worker, a car salesperson, a food technologist and a dental assistant. A number of people commented that they would take any paid work available.

Table 12.20 Whether *recently arrived* refugees had looked for work in the four weeks prior to each interview

Looked for work	Refugee type							
	Quota		Convention		Family Reunion		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
6 months								
Yes	13	15	14	34	8	14	35	19
No	74	85	27	66	48	86	149	81
Total	87	100	41	100	56	100	184	100
2 years								
Yes	7	10	11	34	16	38	34	24
No	62	90	21	66	26	62	109	76
Total	69	100	32	100	42	100	143	100

Note

1. At six months, four did not respond and one did not know. At two years, one did not respond and three did not know.
2. Does not include those 14 years or younger or 65 years or older.

Table 12.21 describes the methods *recently arrived* refugees used to look for work. Most people indicated that they used more than one method and participants at six months tended to use more methods to find work than those at two years. The most common methods used were looking at job advertisements and contacting family and friends, followed by contacting employers. Work and Income (W&I) was used by 14 individuals at six months and eight individuals at two years. At six months, six people placed their own advertisement to find work, although no-one used this method at two years.

Six *recently arrived* refugees placed their own advertisement for a job at six months.

Table 12.21 Methods *recently arrived* refugees used to look for work

Ways of looking for work	6 months	2 years
	n	n
Looked at job advertisements	23	23
Friends or family	21	20
Contacted employers	18	11
Work and Income	14	8
Placed advertisements	6	0
Private employment agency	5	3
Took steps to set up own business	1	3
Career advisor	1	2
Other	2	3
Total participants	35	34

Note

1. Participants could give multiple responses.
2. Does not include those 16 years or younger or 65 years or older.

Nineteen percent of established refugees were looking for work at five years.

Of the *established* refugees, 33 people (19 percent) had looked for paid work in the past four weeks. Ten of them were already in paid work. Eight people were looking for work in the retail or financial services area, and a further seven were looking for jobs requiring ‘elementary skills’. Other types of work mentioned were fork lift driving, hairdressing, in the food industry, and the police force. Seven individuals said they were looking for any job.

As with *recently arrived* refugees, *established* refugees often used a number of methods to try and find work (Table 12.22). The most frequently used methods were looking at advertisements (24 responses) and contacting employers (20 responses). A number used friends and family and W&I to assist them with finding work.

Table 12.22 Methods established refugees used to look for work

Ways of looking for work	Total n
Looked at job advertisements	24
Contacted employers	20
Friends or family	14
Work and Income	11
Private employment agency	4
Career advisor	3
Placed advertisements	2
Took steps to set up own business	1
Other	2
Total participants	33

Note

1. Participants could give multiple responses.
2. Does not include those aged 16 years or younger or 65 years or older.

12.14 VOLUNTARY WORK

Voluntary work is one way that refugees are able to get work experience in order to enter the paid workforce. It is also a way they can assist members of their community and rebuild self-esteem and work habits. All research participants were asked if they had participated in voluntary work since arrival and their responses are shown in Table 12.23.

The question asked was ‘Have you done any unpaid or voluntary work?’ It is important to note participants were asked about voluntary work over different periods (as outlined in Table 12.23) and so the data is not directly comparable. It is possible that some participants did not understand what was meant by ‘voluntary work’, for example, some may consider work in their own ethnic community as an obligation. Participants may have had a better understanding of the concept of voluntary work after they had been in New Zealand longer, which may be reflected in their answers.

Seven percent of *recently arrived* refugees (13 individuals) had taken part in voluntary work some time in the month prior to being interviewed at six months. At two years, 15 percent of *recently arrived* refugees (23 individuals) had done some voluntary work in the last year. Thirty-seven percent of *established*

“[I have been] cleaning the church which our community recently bought. First, it’s our community church. I’m a religious woman and I believe I must do something for God.”

Iraqi Family
Reunion refugee,
six months

refugees (61 individuals) had done some voluntary work since arrival in New Zealand.

Table 12.23 Whether participants had taken part in voluntary work

Whether taken part in voluntary work	Refugee type		
	Recently arrived		Established (since arrival)
	6 months (in the last month)	2 years (in the last year)	
	%	%	%
Yes	7	15	37
No	93	85	63
Total percent	100	100	100
Total number	187	144	165

Note

1. At six months, *recently arrived* refugees were asked about voluntary work in the last month and at two years about voluntary work in the last year. *Established* refugees were asked about voluntary work since arrival in New Zealand.
2. Of the *recently arrived* refugees at six months, two did not respond. At two years, three did not respond. Of the *established* refugees, ten did not respond.
3. Does not include those 14 years or younger for the *recently arrived* refugees or 16 years or younger for the *established* refugees. Does not include those 65 years or older.

Recently arrived refugees participated in a variety of voluntary activities, including providing assistance to NGOs such as the Refugee and Migrant Service (RMS), office or administration work, cleaning, childcare, car maintenance and/or interpreting. Many said they did voluntary work to help their own communities. Other reasons mentioned were to get work experience, to maintain their religion or culture, or for personal satisfaction.

Many of the 61 *established* refugees who said they had taken part in voluntary work had worked within their own ethnic or religious community, such as helping with transport, interpreting and assisting new community members. As well as this, a number worked in healthcare and education settings and private workplaces (including warehouses, construction sites, petrol stations and customer service roles).

While there were a variety of reasons for people doing voluntary work, the main reason *established* refugees did this work was to help other community members and new arrivals (31 responses). Seventeen people commented that they did volunteer work to get work experience or paid work. Other reasons were for satisfaction or fun (7 responses), religious reasons (5 responses) and to meet people (5 responses).

“To get work experience, learning about how to care for the elderly people.”

Somali Quota refugee, five years

12.15 OTHER ACTIVITIES IN NEW ZEALAND

The activities of different refugee groups are partly a reflection of the services and entitlements they receive in New Zealand. Quota refugees are recognised as having special needs and are given priority consideration for government-funded work placement and training programmes. Asylum seekers whose claims have not yet been determined have access to a work permit to allow them to find work and support themselves but are provided with no particular help in finding

“...personally supporting people from my ethnic group through language assistance (and) offering transport.”

Ethiopian Quota refugee, five years

“I felt I had to help others. It is something humane; and I wanted to keep myself busy in some kind of activity.”

Iraqi Quota refugee, five years

employment. In the absence of work, asylum seekers can access an emergency unemployment benefit. Once their claims are successfully determined, Convention refugees have the same access to W&I services as other New Zealanders. Family Reunion refugees arrive as residents and have similar access to W&I services as other New Zealanders, except in the first two years when they can only access the emergency unemployment benefit if they show hardship. Most Family Reunion refugees qualify for an emergency unemployment benefit in their first two years.

This section looks at the activities of participants at each interview, including those who were participating in activities outside of the labour force. Participants may have been doing more than one activity, for example working and studying, in which case they are counted twice in the following tables. The figures presented here differ from those in Section 12.6 where participants were only counted as doing one activity.

12.15.1 Current activities – *recently arrived* refugees

Table 12.24 shows the activities of *recently arrived* refugees in New Zealand in the seven days prior to being interviewed. The most common activity for these refugees at six months was studying (39 percent), followed by being home with children (30 percent) or without children (28 percent). Fifteen percent were in paid work and 12 percent were looking for work.

At two years after arrival or confirmation of their refugee status, 45 percent of *recently arrived* refugees were studying and 30 percent were at home with children. The proportion of *recently arrived* refugees at home without children had decreased from 28 percent at six months to 12 percent.

The main activity *recently arrived* refugees were involved in was studying. At six months, 39 percent were studying, as were 45 percent at two years.

There were differences by refugee type. Quota refugees were the most likely to be studying at both interviews (52 percent were studying at six months and 60 percent at two years). Family Reunion refugees were the least likely to be studying (19 percent at six months and 17 percent at two years). Forty-five percent of Family Reunion refugees were at home without children at six months, dropping to 26 percent at two years. Quota refugees were also more likely than other participants to be at home with children, although this is a reflection of more Quota refugees having dependent children (see Table A.4.8 in Appendix 4). As previously noted, Convention refugees were more likely than other refugees to be working or looking for work.

The proportion of Quota and Convention refugees studying increased between six months and two years. Fifty-two percent of Quota refugees were studying at six months, increasing to 60 percent at two years. The corresponding figures for Convention refugees were 38 percent at six months and 47 percent at two years. Perhaps these participants were more able to afford to study after two years in New Zealand. It could also be the case that participants realised they needed to study in order to get paid work in New Zealand. The study participants took part in is described in more detail in Chapters 10 and 11.

At six months, 10 of the 18 refugees (56 percent) from South East Asia were studying. Thirty-four of the 99 refugees (34 percent) from the Middle East were

studying as were 20 out of 42 (48 percent) from the Horn of Africa. A greater number of the 30 refugees from South Asia (Sri Lanka) were working than were studying (16 and 9 individuals respectively). The proportion of refugees from each region who were studying was similar at six months and two years.

At six months, 35 out of 99 refugees from the Middle East were at home without children (35 percent). However, this number decreased to 12 out of 74 individuals (16 percent) at two years. Of the 18 South East Asian refugees, eight were at home with children at six months and six at two years.

Table 12.24 Activities in the past seven days for recently arrived refugees by refugee type and region

Activity	Refugee type							
	Quota		Convention		Family Reunion		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
6 months								
Studying	46	52	16	38	11	19	73	39
At home with children	35	39	8	19	13	22	56	30
At home without children	22	25	5	12	26	45	53	28
Working for pay or profit	4	4	21	50	4	7	29	15
Looking for work	9	10	10	24	4	7	23	12
Working without pay	0	0	1	2	1	2	2	1
Other	9	10	2	5	8	14	19	10
Total participants	89		42		58		189	
2 years								
Studying	44	60	15	47	7	17	66	45
At home with children	25	34	7	22	12	29	44	30
At home without children	5	7	2	6	11	26	18	12
Working for pay or profit	9	12	17	53	12	29	38	26
Looking for work	4	5	12	38	3	7	19	13
Working without pay	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other	3	4	1	3	8	19	12	8
Total participants	73		32		42		147	
Activity	Region of origin							
	Middle East		Horn of Africa		South Asia		South East Asia	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
6 months								
Studying	34	34	20	48	9	30	10	56
At home with children	29	29	12	29	7	23	8	44
At home without children	35	35	12	29	4	13	2	11
Working for pay or profit	9	9	4	10	16	53	0	0
Looking for work	9	9	5	12	8	27	1	6
Working without pay	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other	11	11	1	2	2	7	5	28
Total participants	99		42		30		18	
2 years								
Studying	32	43	14	47	9	36	11	61
At home with children	20	27	11	37	7	28	6	33
At home without children	12	16	1	3	3	12	2	11
Working for pay or profit	15	20	7	23	15	60	1	6
Looking for work	4	5	2	7	12	48	1	6
Working without pay	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other	10	14	1	3	0	0	1	6
Total participants	74		30		25		18	

Note

1. At six months, one did not know. Does not include those 14 years or younger or 65 years or older.
2. Participants could give multiple responses so columns do not add to 100 percent.

Table 12.25 shows the activities for *recently arrived* refugees by gender. The proportion of men and women studying was similar at six months (37 and 41 percent respectively) and at two years (47 and 43 percent respectively). Women were more likely to be at home with children than the men. There was a decrease in the number of women at home without children at two years. Men were more likely to be working or looking for work at both interviews.

Table 12.25 Activities in the past seven days for *recently arrived* refugees by gender

Activity	6 months		2 years	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
	%	%	%	%
Studying	37	41	47	43
At home without children	30	26	12	13
At home with children	19	42	18	43
Working for pay or profit	25	5	35	16
Looking for work	15	8	22	3
Working without pay	1	1	0	0
Other	12	8	8	9
Total participants	97	91	77	70

Note

1. At six months, one did not know.
2. Participants could give multiple responses so columns do not add to 100 percent.
3. Does not include those 14 years or younger or 65 years or older.

As Table 12.26 shows, the most common activity for *established* refugees was being at home with children (39 percent). Sixty-three percent of women were at home with children compared to 17 percent of men. Just over a quarter of *established* refugees were working and 22 percent were studying. Twice as many men as women were working at five years (39 percent compared to 17 percent) while again the proportion studying was similar for men and women (21 and 23 percent respectively). It is of note that there were no gender differences in the proportion of *recently arrived* refugees studying at six months and two years or of *established* refugees at five years. Twelve percent were looking for work (mostly men).

The main activity *established* refugees were involved in was being at home with children (39 percent).

Table 12.26 Activities in the past seven days for *established* refugees by gender

Activity	Gender		
	Male	Female	Total
	%	%	%
Studying	21	23	22
At home without children	12	6	9
At home with children	17	63	39
Working for pay or profit	39	17	28
Looking for work	19	4	12
Working without pay	1	1	1
Other	13	4	9
Total participants	90	83	173

Note

1. Two did not respond.
2. Participants could give multiple responses so columns do not add to 100 percent.
3. Does not include those aged 16 years or younger or 65 years or older.

Table 12.27 shows the activities of *established* refugees by region of origin. A number of the 11 refugees from South East Asia said they were studying or at home with children (7 responses each). The most common activity for the 12 refugees from South Asia was working (8 of the 12 South Asian *established* refugees were men). The most common activity for participants from the Middle East and the Horn of Africa was being at home with children. This partly reflects participants from these regions having larger families than other participants (in a number of cases, four or more children). Seventeen refugees from the Middle East were working for pay or profit, as were 24 refugees from the Horn of Africa.

Table 12.27 Activities in the past week for *established* refugees by region

Activity	Region or origin							
	Middle East		Horn of Africa		South Asia		South East Asia	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Studying	12	18	16	20	3	25	7	64
At home without children	10	15	6	7	0	0	0	0
At home with children	25	37	32	39	3	25	7	64
Working for pay or profit	17	25	24	29	7	58	1	9
Looking for work	9	13	6	7	3	25	2	18
Working without pay	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	9
Other	11	16	2	2	1	8	1	9
Total participants	68		82		12		11	

Note

1. Two did not respond.
2. Participants could give multiple responses so columns do not add to 100 percent.
3. Does not include those 16 years or younger or 65 years or older.

12.16 SUMMARY

The activities of different refugee groups are partly a reflection of the services and entitlements they receive in New Zealand. Quota refugees have access to government-funded work placement and training programmes and asylum seekers have access to a work permit and emergency unemployment benefit while waiting for their claims to be determined. Once their claims are successfully determined, Convention refugees have the same access to W&I services as other New Zealanders. Family Reunion and Quota refugees arrive as residents and have similar access to W&I services as other New Zealanders.

As could be expected, employment rates were low for all participants, although half of Convention refugees were employed two years after their refugee status was determined. For comparison, migrants overall had an employment rate of 53 percent at six months after residence uptake and 62 percent at 18 months. Family and International/Humanitarian migrants had an employment rate of 41 percent at six months and 52 percent at 18 months (DoL Pilot Survey Report (LisNZ), Dunstan, Boyd & Crichton, 2004).

Sixty-six percent of the *recently arrived* refugees who had looked for work in New Zealand had worked at some time (ranging from 46 percent of Quota to 86 percent of Convention refugees). Of the 110 *established* refugees who had looked for employment in New Zealand, 79 percent had worked at some stage. When looking at current employment (in the seven days prior to being

interviewed), the rate was much lower. Sixteen percent of *recently arrived* refugees were working at six months and 26 percent were working at two years, indicating that participants do get work in New Zealand, but it is not necessarily sustainable.

Convention refugees had a much higher labour force activity rate than Quota or Family Reunion refugees. Half of Convention refugees were working at each interview, compared to 4 percent of Quota refugees at six months and 12 percent at two years. Nine percent of Family Reunion refugees were working at six months and 29 percent were working at two years. Convention refugees were more qualified, had more work experience and rated their English language ability higher than other participants.

For both *recently arrived* and *established* refugees, participants from South Asia had the highest labour force participation rate and those from South East Asia had the lowest. Many participants from South East Asia were studying. This is consistent with the findings of a focus group with Burmese refugees where participants said their priority was to learn English and improve their qualifications before looking for work.

Of the *recently arrived* refugees, half of those working at six months were employed part-time and half were employed full-time. At two years, twice as many were working part-time as were working full-time. Of the 16 Convention refugees who were working at two years, 11 were working part-time. Of the 49 *established* refugees, 19 were working part-time. There are more incentives for refugees to work part-time than full-time. The type of work often available to refugees may not pay much more than the unemployment benefit and refugees may be nervous about moving off the benefit and facing problems having it reinstated if need be. In many cases, a more desirable option for refugees is to work part-time and supplement their income with a government benefit until they acquire the skills and work experience necessary to access employment that pays significantly more than the benefit.

For those who worked, family and friends were often cited as an important source of help with finding work.

Of the *recently arrived* refugees who were employed, 56 percent at six months and 65 percent at two years were satisfied with their job. Sixty-nine percent of *established* refugees were satisfied with their job. Around 30 percent of participants at each interview were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. A number of participants said what they liked about their jobs were their co-workers and the opportunity to practise their English, as well as the pay. The main areas disliked were a lack of career path and the low incomes. This is likely to reflect the types of occupations of participants with many in service and sales and in elementary occupations.

Of the *recently arrived* refugees interviewed at two years who had looked for work, 69 percent had experienced difficulties (ranging from 46 percent of Convention refugees to 85 percent of Family Reunion refugees). The most common difficulty noted was a lack of English language ability, followed by a

lack of work experience (particularly New Zealand work experience). These are difficulties that other migrants face finding work in New Zealand. Some *established* refugees referred to discrimination from employers.

Nineteen percent of *recently arrived* refugees interviewed at six months and 24 percent at two years had looked for work in the month prior to being interviewed. A number who were looking for work were already in paid employment. Convention refugees were the most likely to be looking for work, with one third looking for work at both interviews. The proportion of Family Reunion refugees looking for work increased from 14 percent at six months to 38 percent at two years. The proportion of Quota refugees looking for work decreased from 15 percent at six months to 10 percent at two years.

Participants were involved in a range of activities outside of the labour market. Many *recently arrived* refugees were studying (39 percent at six months and 45 percent at two years). Quota refugees were most likely to be studying, while Family Reunion refugees were least likely. Thirty percent of *recently arrived* refugees were at home with children at both interviews. There was a decrease in the proportion of *recently arrived* refugees at home without children from 28 percent at six months to 12 percent at two years and an increase in the proportion working (15 percent at six months and 26 percent at two years). Of the *established* refugees, 22 percent were studying, 39 percent were at home with children and 9 percent were at home without children.

13 FINANCIAL SUPPORT AND INCOME

13.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the sources of income for participants and the experiences of those receiving a government benefit, and/or earning a salary or wage. Participants were asked whether their income was adequate to meet their needs and whether they were sending money to family overseas.

Resettlement takes time and financial support assists by allowing refugees that time.

Some questions in this section were not applicable to individuals who were dependent on their parents. Of the *recently arrived* refugees this included 15 people interviewed at six months and 12 people at two years. Of the *established* refugees, 15 individuals did not answer some questions. The topics covered in this chapter include:

- the access refugees had to different forms of financial support;
- sources of income;
- whether they had worked for a salary or wages in the last two weeks;
- sending money overseas; and
- whether participants had enough income to meet their needs.

Key themes

- ➔ The main source of income for nine out of ten *recently arrived* refugees was a government benefit. Fewer Convention refugees than Quota refugees or Family Reunion refugees were receiving a government benefit as their main income.
- ➔ Fifty-eight percent of Convention refugees interviewed at six months had received a salary or wage since arrival. At two years, 50 percent had received a salary or wage in the past two weeks.
- ➔ The majority of *established* refugees (78 percent) were reliant on a government benefit. Nineteen percent depended on a salary or wage.
- ➔ The majority of participants who were earning a salary or wage were receiving less than \$30,000 per annum, many less than \$10,000. Many individuals supplemented their wage with a government benefit.
- ➔ Of the *recently arrived* refugees, 13 percent interviewed at six months and 6 percent at two years regularly sent money to family overseas. Just over one quarter of *established* refugees regularly sent money overseas. The amount sent ranged from \$20 per month to \$8,000 per annum.
- ➔ Two thirds of *recently arrived* refugees interviewed at six months and just over one half at two years felt they did not have enough money to meet their needs. Quota refugees were more likely than other participants to feel they did not have enough, reflecting less earning a salary or wage and needing to support large families on a benefit. Fifty-three percent of *established* refugees said they did not have enough money to meet their needs.
- ➔ The main reason participants gave for not having enough money was the cost of daily living such as, rent, food, clothing, healthcare, transport and meeting their children's needs. Some *established* refugees said they did not have enough money due to sending money to family overseas.

The main source of income for participants came from government benefits.

Emergency benefits are available to Quota, Family Reunion and Convention refugees.

13.2 ACCESS TO DIFFERENT FORMS OF FINANCIAL SUPPORT

When Quota refugees first arrive in New Zealand they are eligible to receive an emergency unemployment benefit at the same rate as benefits provided to other unemployed New Zealanders.⁵⁵ They may also be eligible for other assistance such as a disability allowance or an accommodation supplement. Quota refugees are also provided with a special grant of \$1,200 for re-establishment costs.⁵⁶ The grant is to cover costs including essential household furnishings, connecting the telephone and power, clothing requirements, attending English language classes and translation costs for work-related documents.

Under standard family sponsored immigration policy, the New Zealand sponsor must declare they will support the sponsored person for two years, and a two year stand-down for benefits applies. However, emergency benefits are available to Family Reunion refugees if the sponsor was a former refugee. Then the sponsor does not have to declare sufficient personal resources to maintain the individual or individuals they are sponsoring to New Zealand for the first 24 months. However, persons who are of retirement age, or who are invalids, may not be granted the statutory superannuation or invalid's benefit until they have been usually resident in New Zealand for ten years, and may therefore access an emergency unemployment or sickness benefit during this time.

Asylum seekers whose claims have not yet been determined have access to a work permit to allow them to find work and support themselves. They may also be granted an emergency unemployment benefit if they cannot find work.⁵⁷ Post-determination, Convention refugees may apply for an emergency unemployment benefit, but are not entitled to a re-establishment grant.

13.3 SOURCES OF INCOME

13.3.1 *Recently arrived refugees – all sources of income*⁵⁸

Almost all recently arrived refugees had received a government benefit since arrival.

Recently arrived refugees at six months were asked about their sources of income since arriving in New Zealand (see Table 13.1). The large majority of these individuals had received a government benefit after this time (ranging from 99 percent of Quota refugees to 91 percent of Family Reunion refugees). Fifty-eight percent of Convention refugees had received a salary or wage since arriving in New Zealand, while 9 percent of Family Reunion and 3 percent of Quota refugees had received income from a salary or wage. Eight percent of Family Reunion refugees said they received income from another family member.

Fifty-eight percent of Convention refugees had received a salary or wage since arriving in New Zealand. This compared to 9 percent of Family Reunion refugees and 3 percent of Quota refugees.

Convention refugees had often been in New Zealand for longer than other groups, while waiting for determination of their refugee status. Also, as is discussed in Chapter 3, compared to other participants, Convention refugees had

⁵⁵ Emergency benefits are payable to people who are New Zealand residents or citizens, who have been in New Zealand for less than two years (if unemployed or a sole parent) or ten years (if an invalid or aged over 65 years) and who are at least 16 years old.

⁵⁶ If there are more than two children in a family, \$100 extra is paid for each additional child.

⁵⁷ Asylum seekers are the only group of non-New Zealand citizens or permanent residents who may be granted assistance under the Social Security Act.

⁵⁸ The numbers in this section differ slightly from those in Chapter 12 because the time periods examined were slightly different.

spent more years in education, had higher qualification levels and were more likely to have worked before coming to New Zealand. Convention refugees also rated their English language ability higher on arrival than other participants (see Chapter 10). All of these factors are important in finding work and at least partly account for why more Convention refugees had received a salary or wage.

At two years, *recently arrived* refugees were asked about their sources of income in the two weeks prior to being interviewed. Ninety-one percent had received a government benefit (ranging from 96 percent of Quota refugees to 87 percent of Convention refugees). Twenty-three percent indicated they had received a salary or wage. Half of Convention refugees had received a salary or wage compared to 22 percent of Family Reunion and 14 percent of Quota refugees. Thirteen percent of Convention refugees (4 individuals) were self employed at two years.

Table 13.1 All sources of income for *recently arrived* refugees

Type of income	Refugee type							
	Quota		Convention		Family Reunion		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
6 months (since arrival)								
Government benefit	86	99	38	95	59	91	183	95
Salary/wages	3	3	23	58	6	9	32	17
Family member	0	0	0	0	5	8	5	3
Total participants	87		40		65		192	
2 years (in past two weeks)								
Government benefit	66	96	26	87	45	88	137	91
Salary/wages	10	14	15	50	11	22	35	23
Self employment	0	0	4	13	0	0	4	3
Family member	0	0	0	0	2	4	2	1
Other	0	0	1	3	0	0	1	1
None	0	0	0	0	1	2	1	1
Total participants	69		30		51		150	

Note

1. At six months, participants were asked about sources of income since arrival. At two years, participants were asked about sources of income in the previous two weeks.
2. At six months, one did not know and one did not respond. Does not include 15 participants at six months and 12 participants at two years who were dependent on their parents.
3. Participants could give multiple responses so columns do not add to 100 percent.

13.3.2 *Recently arrived* refugees - main source of income

Table 13.2 shows the main source of income for *recently arrived* refugees at six months and two years. At six months, participants were asked about their main source of income since arriving in New Zealand. At two years, participants were asked about their main source of income in the two weeks prior to being interviewed. Nine in ten individuals at both interviews mainly relied on a government benefit. Quota refugees were more likely than other participants to be receiving a government benefit (98 percent at six months and 97 percent at two years).

Because much of their work was part-time and/or low paid, many *recently arrived* refugees also received a benefit to supplement their income.

The main source of income for nine in ten *recently arrived* refugees was a government benefit. Almost all Quota refugees were receiving a benefit as their main source of income at both interviews.

The main source of income for 9 percent of *recently arrived* refugees interviewed at six months and 8 percent at two years was a salary or wage. Twenty-seven percent of Convention refugees at six months received a salary or wage as their main income and this proportion decreased slightly to 20 percent at two years. As is discussed in Chapter 12, although more participants were working at two years than at six months, many were working part-time. This would account for the decrease in the proportion receiving a salary or wage as their main source of income at two years compared to six months, as these individuals were likely to be supplementing their income with a government benefit. Eight percent of Family Reunion refugees at both interviews received a salary or wage as their main income. A small proportion received their main income from other sources such as family members or self employment.

Table 13.2 Main source of income for *recently arrived* refugees

Main source of income	Refugee type							
	Quota		Convention		Family Reunion		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
6 months (since arrival)								
Government benefit	85	98	28	68	57	90	170	89
Salary or wages	1	1	11	27	5	8	17	9
Other	1	1	2	5	1	2	4	2
Total	87	100	41	100	63	100	191	100
2 years (in past two weeks)								
Government benefit	65	97	23	77	44	86	132	89
Salary or wages	2	3	6	20	4	8	12	8
Other	0	0	1	3	2	4	3	2
None	0	0	0	0	1	2	1	1
Total	67	100	30	100	51	100	148	100

Note

1. At six months, participants were asked about their main source of income since arrival. At two years, participants were asked about their main source of income in the previous two weeks.
2. At six months, one did not know and two did not respond. At two years, two did not know. Does not include 15 participants at six months and 12 participants at two years who were dependent on their parents.

13.3.3 *Established* refugees - sources of income

Table 13.3 shows the sources from which *established* refugees received their income in the two weeks prior to being interviewed. Seventy-nine percent received a government benefit, 29 percent received a salary or wage and 3 percent received income from another source. The main source of income for 78 percent of *established* refugees was a government benefit while 19 percent relied on a salary or wage. A small number indicated they received their main income from self employment or an ‘other’ source.

The main source of income for *established* refugees was a government benefit. One fifth of *established* refugees had a salary or wage as their main source.

Table 13.3 Sources of income for established refugees in the past 14 days

Type of income	All sources		Main source	
	n	%	n	%
Government benefit	137	79	136	78
Salary/wages	50	29	33	19
Self employment	3	2	2	1
Other	2	1	2	1
None	1	1	1	1
Total	174		174	100

Note

1. For 'all sources' participants could give multiple responses so column does not add to 100 percent.
2. Does not include 15 participants who were dependent on their parents.

13.4 WORKED FOR SALARY OR WAGES IN PAST TWO WEEKS

Table 13.4 shows the proportion of *recently arrived* refugees who had earned a salary or wage in the two weeks before each interview. At six months, 16 percent earned salary or wages, mostly Convention refugees. More than half of Convention refugees were earning a salary or wage at six months.

At two years, just less than one quarter of *recently arrived* refugees had received a salary or wage in the previous two weeks. Thirteen percent of Quota refugees had earned a salary or wage as had 22 percent of Family Reunion refugees and 48 percent of Convention refugees. As is discussed in Chapter 12, a slightly smaller proportion of Convention refugees were working at two years than at six months. This may indicate that these individuals were initially employed on short-term contracts, such as seasonal work.

Table 13.4 Whether *recently arrived* refugees had worked for salary or wages in the past 14 days

Worked for salary or wages	Refugee type							
	Quota		Convention		Family Reunion		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
6 months								
Yes	4	5	22	55	4	6	30	16
No	84	95	18	45	61	94	163	84
Total	88	100	40	100	65	100	193	100
2 years								
Yes	9	13	15	48	11	22	35	23
No	59	87	16	52	39	78	114	77
Total	68	100	31	100	50	100	149	100

Note

1. At six months, one did not respond. At two years, one did not know. Does not include 15 participants at six months and 12 participants at two years who were dependent on their parents.

Table 13.5 shows the average income per annum for those *recently arrived* refugees who received a salary or wage in the past two weeks. At six months, 11 individuals were earning \$10,000 or less, eight people were earning between \$10,001 and \$20,000 and ten people between \$20,001 and \$30,000. Of the 31 individuals who received a salary or wage at two years, most were earning

Most recently arrived refugees who were earning a salary or wage were earning less than \$30,000 per annum.

\$10,000 or less (22 individuals), four people were earning between \$10,001 and \$20,000, four were earning between \$20,001 and \$30,000 and one person was earning between \$30,001 and \$40,000. Many of the *recently arrived* refugees who were working at two years were in part-time work which explains why their salaries were less at two years than at six months.

Of the 174 *established* refugees who responded to the income section, three in ten (51 individuals) had worked for a wage or salary in the last two weeks. Nineteen of these individuals were earning \$10,000 or less, 13 were earning between \$10,001 and \$20,000 and nine were earning between \$20,001 and \$30,000. Seven individuals were earning over \$30,000.

Fewer participants at two years than at six months were earning over \$10,000 from a salary or wage. Many were working part-time at two years.

Table 13.5 Average income per annum for participants who received a salary or wage in the past 14 days

Average wage/salary per annum	Refugee type		
	Recently arrived		Established
	6 months	2 years	
	n	n	n
\$10,000 or less	11	22	19
\$10,001 to \$20,000	8	4	13
\$20,001 to \$30,000	10	4	9
\$30,001 to \$40,000	0	1	5
\$40,001 to \$50,000	0	0	1
\$50,001 and over	0	0	1
Total	29	31	48

Note

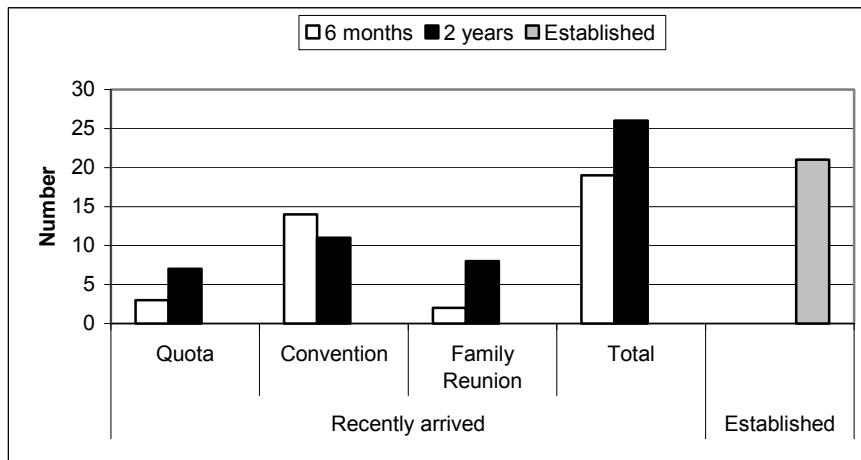
1. Of the *recently arrived* refugees interviewed at six months, one did not know. At two years, three did not know and one did not respond. Of the *established* refugees, three did not know.

13.4.1 Salary or wage as well as a government benefit

Nineteen individuals at six months and 26 individuals at two years were supplementing their salary or wage with a government benefit.

From Table 13.5 it can be seen that many refugees were in low wage or part-time work, therefore a number of participants were supplementing their salary or wage with a government benefit. Of the *recently arrived* refugees at six months, 19 individuals were receiving a benefit as well as a salary or wage. At two years, 26 individuals were receiving a benefit as well as a salary or wage (see Figure 13.1). A total of 21 *established* refugees were receiving both a government benefit and a salary or wage.

Figure 13.1 Number of participants receiving a salary or wage and a government benefit n=19 (6 months), 26 (2 years), 21 (established)



13.4.2 Findings from the focus groups

A theme that came through strongly from a number of focus groups was that receiving a benefit often created a barrier to employment. A group of service providers felt refugees often came to New Zealand wanting to work, but once they received the benefit their attitude changed. A group of Burmese refugees in Nelson as well as other groups of refugee men and women also raised this issue.

“A major hurdle is the fear of moving off the benefit. And with refugees, some of them really want to work and aren’t interested in the benefit. But once you get them on the benefit, it can be really hard to shake them off it.”

Service provider, focus group

One of the problems discussed was if one member of a family finds work, the benefit is cut for other members of the family, which created problems. Also, the difference between the amount received on the benefit and wages from working was often small (especially when costs for large families are taken into account). In some cases refugees would receive less working than they would on a benefit. A number of individuals felt that there were many disincentives to finding paid work. The research associates argued that families could often get more on a benefit than in work and felt single refugees were the main group who were actively looking for work.

“...because if they sit at home, they get more pay than if they went to work.”

Kurdish man, focus group

Some service providers felt that although wages were often very low, refugees did not always understand their government entitlements, such as a clothing allowance from the Ministry of Social Development’s Work and Income (W&I) or a family top-up from the Inland Revenue Department. A group of Burmese refugees in Nelson felt they did not have enough information about W&I and their entitlements.

“With six family members he gets quite a lot of money from the benefit. He is afraid that if he gets a job he will lose the good benefit because he doesn’t feel he can earn that much. He is happy to get a benefit because it is more than he could earn.”

Burmese man, focus group (through translator)

“I have been working with the Regional Commissioner of WINZ [W&I], looking to address some of the long term refugee and migrant employment problems. I work more closely with job brokers and case managers to try to help some people...”

Service provider, focus group

Service providers also felt that more needed to be done in terms of matching refugees' skills with employment. Service providers in Wellington mentioned this was an area in which they were working with W&I to address.

13.5 SENDING MONEY OVERSEAS

Thirteen percent of *recently arrived* refugees at six months, and 6 percent at two years regularly sent money to family overseas.

The separation of families can lead to financial pressures, with family members in New Zealand feeling a duty to support others still living overseas. Liew and Kezo (1998), Matsuoka and Sorenson (1999), Bihi (1999), and Elliott and Gray (2000) have all noted the obligations of refugees to send money back to those overseas, many of them still in refugee camps.

Table 13.6 shows the proportion of participants who sent money to people living overseas. Of the *recently arrived* refugees, 13 percent at six months (27 people) and 6 percent at two years (9 people) regularly sent money overseas. Over half of those who sent money at six months were Quota refugees, while at two years, three individuals from each refugee group sent money overseas. *Recently arrived* refugees were mainly sending money to parents, children and siblings with a few people at six months sending money to other relatives including aunts, uncles and cousins.

Just over a quarter of *established* refugees regularly sent money overseas.

Just over a quarter of *established* refugees regularly sent money to family overseas. The money was mainly sent to siblings and parents, with five people indicating they sent money to friends. It is possible that participants would under-report the amount sent overseas as they would not want to create the impression they have extra income.

Table 13.6 Whether participants regularly sent money to people living overseas

Whether money sent overseas	Refugee type					
	Recently arrived				Established	
	6 months		2 years		n	%
n	%	n	%			
Yes	27	13	9	6	51	27
No	176	87	152	94	137	73
Total	203	100	161	100	188	100

Note

1. Of the *recently arrived* refugees interviewed at six months, six did not respond. At two years, one did not respond. Of the *established* refugees, one did not know.

13.5.1 How often and amount of money sent overseas

Participants often sent a substantial amount of money to family overseas - ranging from \$50 per month to around \$8000 per year.

Research participants were asked how often they sent money overseas and what amount they sent. Half of those who were sending money overseas at six months were doing so monthly. The amount sent per month ranged from \$50 to \$500. Other amounts sent ranged from \$130 every two months to \$5000 every year. Two people indicated they sent what they were able.

Of the nine participants at two years who were sending money overseas, the amount sent ranged from \$20 per month to \$2000 every six months. One person mentioned they sent \$2000 when they were able to. A number indicated they converted their money into American dollars before sending it.

Of the 51 *established* refugees who regularly sent money overseas, 18 individuals sent monthly amounts ranging from \$100 to around \$500. A number sent money once or twice a year. These amounts sent ranged from \$200 to \$2000 per annum. The largest amount sent was \$2000 every quarter.

13.6 WHETHER PARTICIPANTS HAD ENOUGH INCOME TO MEET THEIR NEEDS

Research participants were asked if they had enough money to meet their everyday needs. The question was worded ‘do you think you have enough money to meet your everyday needs for things such as accommodation, food, clothing and other necessities?’

13.6.1 Recently arrived refugees

Of the *recently arrived* refugees interviewed at six months, 66 percent felt they did not have enough money to meet their needs while 5 percent did not know (see Table 13.7). At two years, 55 percent felt they did not have enough money to meet their needs and 10 percent did not know. At two years, Quota refugees, followed by Family Reunion refugees, were the most likely to feel they did not have enough income. Seventy-three percent of Quota refugees at six months and 69 percent at two years commented that they did not have enough. This reflects the smaller proportion of Quota refugees earning a salary or wage. Also, Quota refugees tended to live in larger families and often cited the high cost of household bills and needing to spend money on clothing for their children as reasons for not having enough income.

Convention refugees were more likely than other groups to say they had enough income with 37 percent saying so at six months and 65 percent at two years. Thirty-five percent of Family Reunion refugees said they had enough income to meet their needs at six months, increasing to 45 percent at two years.

Table 13.7 Whether recently arrived refugees had enough income to meet their needs

Enough income	Refugee type							
	Quota		Convention		Family Reunion		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
6 months								
Yes	20	21	15	37	24	35	59	29
No	69	73	26	63	40	58	135	66
Don't know	6	6	0	0	5	7	11	5
Total	95	100	41	100	69	100	205	100
2 years								
Yes	12	16	20	65	23	45	55	35
No	52	69	10	32	25	49	87	55
Don't know	11	15	1	3	3	6	15	10
Total	75	100	31	100	51	100	157	100

Note

1. At six months, four did not respond. At two years, five did not respond.
2. Those who did not know are included in the table.

Two thirds of participants at six months and just over half at two years felt they did not have enough money to meet their needs.

“Feeding, clothing and looking after six kids, my wife and myself is not easy. Everything is expensive, especially new clothes.”

Iraqi Quota refugee, six months

“Considering the general circumstances of others, I am OK. I have to carefully budget what I have got.”

Somali Quota refugee, two years

“It’s enough for basic expenses but I cannot buy proper clothes for myself and my wife and children.”

Afghan Convention refugee, two years

Some of the common responses *recently arrived* refugees gave for having or not having enough income are below in Table 13.8. The reasons given at six months and two years were similar. A number of people commented that the cost of living (including accommodation, clothing, healthcare and transport) was high and several people specifically mentioned that providing for their children was expensive.

Those who felt they had enough income often commented they had just enough to cover basic expenditure. A reason that many had enough was through careful budgeting. Other people said that they shared expenses with someone else or relied on another family member.

Table 13.8 Reasons *recently arrived* refugees had or did not have enough income

6 months (responses)	2 years (responses)
<p>Not enough income</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Cost of living is expensive (65) ▪ Children’s needs are expensive (26) ▪ Not enough to cover basic expenditure (25) ▪ Household bills (20) ▪ Benefit is not enough (16) <p>Enough income</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Careful budgeting (24) ▪ Enough to cover basic expenditure (9) ▪ Share expenses with someone else (6) ▪ Depend on another member of family (6) 	<p>Not enough income</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Not enough to cover all needs (46) ▪ Cost of living is expensive (37) ▪ Children’s needs are expensive (19) ▪ Benefit is not enough or has stopped (10) <p>Enough income</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Careful budgeting (20) ▪ Enough to cover basic expenditure (19) ▪ Share expenses with someone else (6)

Note

1. Participants could give multiple responses.

“Rent is very expensive. My wife is unable to work as we have two babies and we don’t have any others to leave the children with. We can spend only for essential needs.”

Sri Lankan Convention refugee, two years

13.6.2 Established refugees

I have four kids, and one of them is sick. My wife is also sick. Everything is going up - paying bills, phone, electricity, using the car to take my wife and daughter to hospital, specialists, or special school.

Iraqi Quota refugee, five years

Of the 189 *established* refugees, 41 percent felt they had enough money to meet their needs, 53 percent did not have enough and 6 percent did not know. The cost of living was the main reason *established* refugees cited for not having enough income. This included daily expenses such as rent, food, clothing, transport and healthcare. Fifteen people said they found it expensive meeting their children’s needs. A number of individuals said they did not have enough because they had to send money to family overseas. They felt an obligation to their families, who were often in refugee camps and therefore needed money to survive. Some mentioned they did not have enough for their large families.

“High rent and I have to send money to my family or they will starve.”

Somali Quota refugee, five years

“Sometimes the electricity bill is more than what I receive in total.”

Somali Quota refugee, five years

Of the *established* refugees who felt they had enough income, many said they had enough only for their basic expenditure. Some said they budgeted carefully while others lived with their family and shared expenses with them. Twelve *established* refugees commented they had enough income because they were in paid employment. The main reasons that these individuals had or did not have enough are below in Table 13.9.

“We have to spend money very carefully. No spending for other extra activities (no beer, no drinking)”

Vietnamese Quota refugee, five years

Table 13.9 Reasons *established* refugees had or did not have enough income

Not enough income (responses)	Enough income (responses)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Cost of living (77) ▪ Have to send money to family (18) ▪ Children’s needs are expensive (15) ▪ Not enough for large family (15) ▪ Not enough for needs (15) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Enough for basic expenditure (23) ▪ Careful budgeting or ‘make do’ (16) ▪ Live with family (16) ▪ Paid employment (12)

Note

1. Participants could give multiple responses.

“Half the money is for rent. We have to buy some medication. Besides, everything is becoming expensive. It's becoming a hard life indeed.”

Iraqi Quota refugee, five years

Eleven *established* refugees said they did not know if they had enough. This was generally because they lived with their parents or were dependent on their spouse’s salary.

A group of Burmese refugees in Nelson (most of whom were receiving a government benefit) took part in a focus group. These individuals felt the benefit they were receiving was not enough or, in some cases, just enough to survive. The main cost they struggled with was rent and they mentioned that the accommodation supplement was not enough to cover this. A group of Somali women taking part in a focus group in Auckland also found it difficult to manage on the benefit, but they felt they had no choice and had to make do. A group of Kurdish men in Christchurch and a group of Burmese men in Auckland felt similarly. They commented the benefit was not enough for more than essentials.

“The benefit is not enough, it is just for essentials like food but for other things it is not enough. If we want to buy something we cannot have it. If we buy anything it has to be second hand.”

Burmese man, focus group

13.7 SUMMARY

As with New Zealand born people on income support or in low paid jobs, having enough income to meet their needs is an issue for refugees. Some refugees have a large family which means their money has to stretch further than for the average New Zealand family. As well as supporting family in New Zealand, refugees often use their income to support family members overseas. Of the *recently arrived* refugees, 13 percent at six months and six percent at two years regularly sent money to family members overseas. Twenty-seven percent of *established* refugees regularly sent money to family members overseas.

Fifty-eight percent of Convention refugees interviewed at six months had received a salary or wage since arriving in New Zealand. This compared to 9 percent of Family Reunion refugees and 3 percent of Quota refugees.

Nearly all *recently arrived* refugees interviewed at six months said they had received a government benefit in New Zealand (ranging from 99 percent of Quota to 91 percent of Family Reunion refugees). Seventeen percent interviewed at six months said they had received a salary or wage, including 58 percent of Convention refugees. At two years, 91 percent said they received a government benefit in the past two weeks and 23 percent had received a salary or wage. That more Convention refugees received a salary or wage is partly due to their having been in New Zealand for longer than other participants while waiting for their refugee status to be determined. Also, compared to other participants, Convention refugees had spent more years in education, had higher qualification levels and were more likely to have worked before coming to New Zealand. Convention refugees also rated their English language ability on arrival higher than other participants. Fewer Convention refugees lived with family members which may be an incentive to work as they would receive less on the benefit than a large family.

The main source of income for nine in ten *recently arrived* refugees at six months and two years was a government benefit. Quota refugees were more likely than other participants to have a benefit as their main income. Nine percent at six months and 8 percent at two years said their main source of income was a salary or wage. Twenty-seven percent of Convention refugees identified their main source of income as a salary or wage but this decreased to 20 percent at two years. The main source of income for *established* refugees in the two weeks prior to being interviewed was a government benefit, while 19 percent relied on a salary or wage.

Most participants who were earning a salary or wage were earning \$30,000 or less per annum. Of the *recently arrived* refugees interviewed at two years, many were working part-time and earning salaries of \$10,000 or less per annum. Of the 48 *established* refugees who were earning a salary or wage, seven were earning more than \$30,000 per annum. That a number of refugees were supplementing their salary or wage with a government benefit is a reflection of the low salaries participants were receiving.

A theme that came through strongly in focus groups was that being on a government benefit created a barrier to employment. One of the issues raised was if one family member finds work, the benefit is cut for other family members. The difference between the benefit and wages refugees received was often too small to make a genuine difference.

Two thirds of *recently arrived* refugees interviewed at six months and just over 55 percent at two years felt they did not have enough income to meet their needs. Quota refugees were particularly likely to say they did not have enough, reflecting the smaller proportion of this group receiving a salary or wage. Quota refugees also tended to live in larger family groups than other participants and these individuals often said they did not have enough to cover household bills and expenses for their children. Fifty-three percent of *established* refugees said they did not have enough income to meet their needs. A common reason given for not having enough income was that the cost of living, especially the cost of meeting children's needs, was expensive. Those who said they had enough

attributed that to careful budgeting. Twelve *established* refugees said they had enough income because they were in paid employment.

05 SOCIAL INTEGRATION

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SECTION 05

This section includes chapters on children and teenagers, social networks, discrimination, cultural integration and participants' overall impressions of being settled (or otherwise) in New Zealand.

Children and teenagers who come to New Zealand as refugees may have spent time in refugee camps and often know little about their own country. For example, the Somali teenagers who took part in this research were brought up in a refugee camp in Kenya. Children and teenage refugees have often had their education disrupted or have not had the chance to take part in formal education.

As a refugees' own ethnic community is important, so is the host community and the need to balance interactions between the two can be stressful. Making friends with people from the host community and taking part in activities in New Zealand can help refugees to integrate.

Refugees coming to New Zealand arrive in a country that has developed a unique history based on its bi-cultural background. The Treaty of Waitangi and subsequent laws protecting the rights of Maori have meaning for those who live in New Zealand. By understanding our history refugees will gain a better understanding of New Zealand society as a whole.

Refugees bring to New Zealand their own cultures, values and beliefs. Bihi (1999) describes cultural identity as an important asset enabling refugees to cope with many adversities, to find support from others, and to help them function as normal human beings. He concluded that refugees should be able to choose whether they maintain their cultural identity or not.

14 CHILDREN AND TEENAGERS

14.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter looks at parents' perceptions of their children's experiences at school and outside of school. The particular difficulties parents see their children facing and the difficulties they have bringing up their children in New Zealand are examined. Teenagers were also asked about resettling in New Zealand, including their experiences at school, what they like and dislike about New Zealand and how easy (or otherwise) it has been for them to settle in New Zealand.

Focus groups were held with a number of teenage refugees (including Afghan, Somali and Burmese teenagers) to explore some issues in more depth. The findings from these focus groups are reported throughout this chapter. The topics covered in this chapter include:

- the context around schooling and teenagers;
- number and age of children;
- whether the children were attending school in New Zealand;
- settling into school;
- help with English language;
- satisfaction with children's schooling;
- children's activities outside school;
- difficulties for children in New Zealand;
- differences being a teenager in New Zealand;
- what teenagers liked and disliked about New Zealand;
- teenagers and school;
- teenagers settling in comparison to parents;
- helping family to settle;
- advice to other teenagers; and
- maintaining culture in New Zealand.

Key themes

- ➔ Most parents said their children did not experience problems settling into school. For the small number who said their children experienced problems, these were most often due to lack of English language ability.
- ➔ Parents noted the importance of good quality and supportive teachers in helping their children to settle into school. Parents also commented that assistance with English language was important.
- ➔ Just over three quarters of *recently arrived* refugees and 69 percent of *established* refugees said their children participated in activities outside of school, such as a team sport, music or dance.
- ➔ Participants felt there were more difficulties for refugee girls in New Zealand than refugee boys. Problems mainly related to cultural and religious factors, such as girls' clothing and girls not being allowed to socialise with boys.

- Fourteen *established* refugees said they had experienced difficulties bringing up their children in New Zealand. Difficulties often related to a clash between cultures.
 - Refugee men and women who took part in focus groups often commented that children were brought up in New Zealand very differently to what they were used to. A commonly discussed difference was children being given more freedom in New Zealand. A group of Burmese men noted the different parenting styles in New Zealand, particularly in relation to disciplining children.
 - *Recently arrived* teenagers discussed what they liked about New Zealand. This included going to school, being able to take part in sport and leisure activities, having friends and having freedom and opportunities.
 - A small number of teenagers discussed aspects of New Zealand they disliked. This often related to the behaviour of other New Zealand teenagers, for example, those who showed a lack of respect for their parents or teachers.
 - Most teenagers liked school and felt it became easier over time. A key reason for school becoming easier was improved English language ability. Many commented on the importance of their teacher in helping them adjust to school.
 - Many teenagers said it was easier for themselves than their parents to resettle in New Zealand because they were younger and could learn English faster.
-

14.2 CONTEXT

The government provides supplementary funding to enable schools to develop programmes that best meet the needs of students from non-English speaking backgrounds. Funding for English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) is provided to schools, upon application, for each identified student of non-English speaking background, and is distributed on a pro-rata basis. Additional funding is allocated for ESOL support for all school-aged refugees for the four years following their enrolment. The National Association of ESOL Home Tutor Schemes (a non-government organisation, NGO), whose English language and support services are prioritised for adult refugees, also receives government funding for its services.

Richman (1998) believes that school can be an important factor in settling children because it provides stability and normality. However, Humpage (1999) and Hyman et al. (2000) found that adjusting to school was one of the most difficult experiences for young refugees.

Teenagers often have special needs as a result of displacement. While many young people do make a successful transition to the new society, the literature generally agrees that young refugees are more at-risk than young people as a whole.

Teenage refugees may experience more pressures than other children their age. They are at an age where they experience peer pressure at school, but may also be feeling the expectations of their parents and elders to carry out activities in a traditional manner that may be quite different from what their peers are doing.

Teenage refugees may have the additional pressure of being needed to interpret and translate for their parents. For these reasons it was important to ask teenagers about their experiences.

14.3 NUMBER AND AGE OF CHILDREN

Parents with children between the ages of five and 17 years were asked questions about their children's experiences in New Zealand. Only one parent per household answered these questions and the aim was to get a general idea of parents' perceptions of their children's experiences in New Zealand. Parents were asked questions in relation to 'their child or children', so where parents had more than one child they were asked to give an overall rating.

Of the *recently arrived* refugees interviewed at six months, 58 parents responded to the questions and 50 parents responded at two years. Of the *established* refugees, 71 parents responded to the questions.

Table 14.1 shows the number of dependent children these participants had. At six months, 40 participants had between one and three children, 14 had between four and six children and three had seven or more children. Similar patterns were evident at two years and also for the *established* group of refugees. Of the *established* refugees, 47 parents had between one and three children, 18 had between four and six children and four had seven or more children.

Table 14.1 Number of children participants had

Number of children	Refugee type					
	Recently arrived				Established	
	6 months		2 years		n	%
	n	%	n	%		
1 to 3	40	70	34	71	47	68
4 to 6	14	25	12	25	18	26
7 or more	3	5	2	4	4	6
Total	57	100	48	100	69	100

Note

1. Of the *recently arrived* refugees interviewed at six months, one did not respond. At two years, two did not respond. Of the *established* refugees, two did not respond.

Table 14.2 shows the ages of participants' children. Of the *recently arrived* refugees, 96 children at six months and 73 at two years were of primary school age (between five and 12 years). Forty-five of the participants' children at six months and 48 at two years were of secondary school age (between 13 and 19 years). For the *established* refugees, 83 children were aged between five and 12 years and 78 were aged between 13 and 19 years. Those who responded to the questions in this section were asked to respond in reference to their children between the ages of five and 17 years.

Table 14.2 Age groups of participants' children

Age groups of children	Refugee type		
	Recently arrived		Established
	6 months	2 years	
	n	n	n
Under 5 years	22	16	42
5 to 12 years	96	73	83
13 to 19 years	45	48	78
Older than 19 years	1	2	0
Total number	164	139	203

14.4 WHETHER CHILDREN WERE ATTENDING SCHOOL IN NEW ZEALAND

Most refugee children attended school in New Zealand. The main reason for children not attending school was not being of age.

Research participants were asked whether their child or children usually attended school in New Zealand (see Table 14.3). Most participants' children were attending school. Of the *recently arrived* refugees, 86 percent of participants said their children were attending school at six months and 88 percent at two years. Two participants at six months and three people at two years said their children were not attending school. Six participants at six months and three participants at two years said only some of their children were attending school.

The main reasons participants gave for their children not attending school was they had not yet turned six. One person at six months said they had not had enough time to settle yet and one person said her child was waiting for a course to start.

Of the *established* refugees, eighty-six percent of the 71 participants said their children were attending school. Eight people said their children were not attending school and two people said only some of their children were attending school. Most participants whose children were not attending school said this was because their children were younger than six years. One participant said her child was not at school because he did not like school and his language was poor.

Table 14.3 Whether children were attending school in New Zealand

Attend school	Refugee type					
	Recently arrived				Established	
	6 months		2 years			
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Yes	50	86	43	88	61	86
Some of them	6	10	3	6	2	3
No	2	3	3	6	8	11
Total	58	100	49	100	71	100

Note

1. At two years, one *recently arrived* refugee did not respond.

14.4.1 Whether children had changed school

Table 14.4 shows whether participants' children had changed schools in New Zealand. At six months, eight participants said their children had changed schools since coming to New Zealand and one participant said some of their children had changed schools. At two years, 17 participants said their children

had changed schools since they were last interviewed and two people said some of their children had changed schools.

Children are able to go to any school unless a home zone had been set up. However, when refugees arrive their children will often go to the school nearest to where they live. When asked why their children had changed schools, most *recently arrived* refugees said their children had changed school because of the family moving locations or the child moving to an intermediate or secondary school.

At six months, one participant said their child had moved schools to go to an Islamic school. At two years, a few people gave other reasons for their children changing schools including that the new school teaches religion, the previous school was poor quality, their child was teased at the previous school and to be closer to home.

Of the 63 *established* refugees who responded to this question, 46 people said their children had changed schools since coming to New Zealand and four people said some of their children had changed schools. As with *recently arrived* refugees, the main reasons for participants' children changing schools were the children moving to intermediate or secondary school or the family moving location. Four people gave other reasons including discrimination, not being happy with the first school, no bus service to the school and to learn Arabic and/or religious studies.

The most common reasons for refugee children changing schools was the family moving location or children moving to intermediate or secondary school.

Table 14.4 Whether participants' children had changed schools

Changed schools	Refugee type		
	<i>Recently arrived</i>		<i>Established</i>
	6 months	2 years	
	n	n	n
Yes	8	17	46
Some of them	1	2	4
No	47	28	13
Total number	56	47	63

14.5 SETTLING INTO SCHOOL

14.5.1 Problems settling into school

Recently arrived refugees at two years and *established* refugees were asked if their children had experienced problems settling into school in New Zealand (see Table 14.5). At two years, seven out of 47 participants said their child or children had experienced problems settling into school. Four out of 11 participants from the Horn of Africa indicated they had experienced problems, compared to three out of 26 from the Middle East.

Seven *recently arrived* and ten *established* refugees said their children had experienced problems settling into school.

Ten out of 63 *established* refugees said their child or children had experienced problems settling into school. Four out of 25 participants from the Horn of Africa said their children had experienced problems as did five of 20 Middle Eastern participants. Of those who said their children had problems, four *recently arrived* refugees and four *established* refugees said those problems still existed at the time of the interview.

Table 14.5 Whether participants' children had problems settling into school

Problems settling	Refugee type			
	Recently arrived (two years)		Established	
	n	%	n	%
Yes	7	15	10	16
No	40	85	53	84
Total	47	100	63	100

“Language problem, not having friends. Not familiar with the environment, different system.”

Afghan Quota refugee, two years

The main problems children had settling into school discussed by *recently arrived* refugees were a lack of English (6 responses) and difficulties making friends (3 responses). A few parents said their children had problems adjusting to a different system of teaching in a new environment and struggled with isolation from members of their ethnic group. One person said their child needed help with homework.

“He could hardly get friends and was lonely. His skin colour put him at the centre of attention, as a result he felt embarrassed.”

Ethiopian Quota refugee, two years

“Not enough English for my daughter who still struggles in school. She needs a lot of support - English help.”

Somali Quota refugee, five years

Six of the ten *established* refugees whose children had experienced problems settling into school said poor English language ability was the main problem. Other difficulties discussed by parents included children being teased by other students or struggling to fit in due to being considered ‘different’ (5 responses) and cultural issues (2 responses). One participant said their children found it difficult to study because they were missing another parent who was still in Africa.

“Only the oldest who is wearing a veil and others find it funny and annoy her.”

Iraqi Quota refugee, five years

14.5.2 What helped children settle into school

“Her teacher is very good. She is helping my daughter a lot to learn English and keep up with the other students.”

Iranian Convention refugee, six months

Research participants were asked what factors, if any, had helped their child or children settle into school. After six months, parents felt having a good school and teachers (21 responses) and being helped with English language (13 responses) were important in helping their children to settle. Other important factors were having friends (9 responses), the children enjoying school (7 responses) and the children’s background (5 responses). Eight parents said they did not know what factors were important.

At two years, parents felt that good quality teachers made it easier for their children to settle into school. This came through strongly with about half of participants commenting on the role of teachers in school.

“She didn't like it very much because she didn't know the language, but the teachers were very good and they paid lots of attention to her.”

Iraqi Family Reunion refugee, two years

“Teachers helped and took special care with our children to help them settle into school.”

Sri Lankan Family Reunion refugee, two years

Other important factors at two years included help with English language (12 responses), having friends (10 responses) and children having fun and enjoying school (9 responses). A few commented on the importance of family support, self-motivation and being at school with students of the same ethnicity.

“They like to study because in the past, when we were in the refugee camps, they did not have chance to go to school.”

Afghan Quota refugee, two years

Established refugees who had children at school also noted the importance of good and helpful teachers (29 responses). Other factors that parents said were important were having extra assistance with English, being able to learn English quickly or already having good ability in English (18 responses).

“Before coming to New Zealand they studied English through a church in the Philippines. They had sufficient knowledge of English.”

Sri Lankan Quota refugee, five years

Parents also commented on their children liking school (12 responses), having friends at school (10 responses) and being able to play sports (8 responses). A number of parents said encouragement at home was an important factor in helping their children settle into school.

14.6 HELP WITH ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Often refugee children require extra help when they first start school. This might include English language help as well as help with other aspects of schooling in a new system. Table 14.6 shows whether *recently arrived* refugees' children received extra help with learning English at school in New Zealand. At six months, just over two thirds said their children had received this assistance. The main help children received was through an ESOL class (21 responses). Other sources of help included a bilingual teacher or tutor, extra language tuition, an interpreter or having individualised assistance at school.

At two years, around one half of parents said their children had received extra help with learning English. This help was often in an ESOL class or individualised assistance from a teacher or additional teaching staff.

Of the 63 *established* refugees who responded to this section, 45 said their children had received extra help with learning English at school. Twenty-nine parents said their children received help from an ESOL class or tutor. Other sources of help included extra after school classes (8 responses) and other individualised help (7 responses).

“The school is close by, and our kids themselves are interested in going to school. The schools are very good, the teachers and other staff are very helpful and caring.”

Iraqi Quota refugee, five years

“They had a bilingual teacher aid at [name] High School and at the moment they are in the mainstream and are receiving extra ESOL sessions everyday.”

Afghan Quota refugee, two years

Table 14.6 Whether participants' children received extra help learning English at school

Received help with English	Refugee type					
	Recently arrived				Established (since arrival)	
	6 months (since arrival)		2 years (since last interview)		n	%
	n	%	n	%		
Yes	37	69	22	49	45	71
No	17	31	23	51	18	29
Total	54	100	45	100	63	100

Note

1. Of the *recently arrived* refugees interviewed at six months, one did not know and one did not respond. At two years, two did not know.
2. Two at six months and one at two years said only some of their children received extra help with English.

14.6.1 Other extra help

Recently arrived refugees at six months and *established* refugees were asked if their children had received other extra help at school (aside from English language assistance). Only six *recently arrived* refugees and five *established* refugees said their children had received extra help at school. At six months, this help included assistance from teachers with homework and with particular subjects. *Established* refugees said their children received help which included attention from medical staff at school, extra help with school work and one person said a school counsellor had helped one of her children.

14.7 SATISFACTION WITH CHILDREN'S SCHOOLING

Of the recently arrived refugees, 89 percent of parents at six months and 83 percent at two years were satisfied with their children's schooling.

Given that parents are placing their children into a new education system, it was important to find out whether they were satisfied with the schooling their children were getting. Parents were asked to rate their child or children's schooling on a five point scale ranging from very dissatisfied to very satisfied. Table 14.7 shows that most participants were satisfied with their children's schooling. At six months, 89 percent of participants said they were very satisfied or satisfied with their children's schooling, as were 83 percent of participants at two years. Four participants at six months and seven participants at two years said they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. Only two people at six months and one person at two years said they were dissatisfied.

Nine in ten established refugees were satisfied with their children's schooling.

Nine in ten *established* refugees said they were satisfied or very satisfied with their children's schooling. Five participants said they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied and only one person was dissatisfied.

At six months, participants were asked their reasons for satisfaction or dissatisfaction with their children's schooling. Forty-eight individuals indicated they were satisfied and their reasons were:

- good teachers, school or education system (24 responses);
- children were happy (17 responses);
- children's English language skills had improved (10 responses);
- the school provided good support for children (9 responses);
- children were doing well at school (8 responses); and

- children were able to attend school (6 responses).

Four participants at six months said they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with their children’s schooling, although their comments indicated a level of dissatisfaction. Some of the comments included, the school not having enough time for the children, a lack of information given to parents and the children not doing enough work.

Table 14.7 Participants’ satisfaction with their children’s schooling

Satisfaction	Refugee type					
	Recently arrived				Established	
	6 months		2 years		n	%
n	%	n	%			
Very satisfied	26	48	25	53	19	32
Satisfied	22	41	14	30	35	58
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	4	7	7	15	5	8
Dissatisfied	2	4	1	2	1	2
Very dissatisfied	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	54	100	47	100	60	100

Note

1. Of the *recently arrived* refugees at six months, two did not respond. Of the *established* refugees, three did not know.

14.7.1 Findings from focus groups

A number of refugees who took part in focus groups discussed their children’s schooling in New Zealand. A group of Burmese refugees said they were generally satisfied with their children’s schooling. These parents said they did not always have a good understanding of the school system. This is a theme that also came through strongly in discussions with service providers. The service providers said parents often found it frustrating if they did not understand their children’s education and could not (for example) help with homework. This point underlines the importance of adult education programmes that incorporate community education components that promote an understanding of New Zealand society.

A specific issue that a group of Somali women discussed was that their children had never attended school in Somalia. In New Zealand their children needed to learn the basics and often had to do this at secondary school. The women felt their children needed special assistance in addition to the ESOL lessons they were receiving. Several service providers discussed this issue and felt that age-based mainstream classes were not always the best way for refugee children to learn. They felt when students did go into the mainstream, additional support with homework was very useful. This is a difficult issue because, on the other hand, special classes for refugee children may create segregation from the rest of the school. This could subsequently make their integration into the school system much more difficult.

“As far as adolescents go, they should not be secondary students. They need some time out of the mainstream.”

Service provider, focus group

“We have a Somali homework centre at our school, and the teachers say they can see the difference between a refugee who has attended the homework centre and one who has not.”

Service provider, focus group

Just over three quarters of recently arrived refugees and 69 percent of established refugees said their children participated in activities outside of school. The activity was often a group sport.

14.8 CHILDREN'S ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE SCHOOL

Recently arrived refugees interviewed at two years and *established* refugees were asked if their children participated in activities outside of school. Just over three quarters of *recently arrived* refugees said their children participated in activities outside of school. The main activity children were involved in was a sport (including 19 children who played soccer). Other children were involved in activities such as music and dance lessons.

Around seven in ten *established* refugees said their children took part in activities outside of school. Most participants said their children were playing a sport and some were involved in music and drama. A few participants said their children were involved in arts and crafts, a cultural group, martial arts or tramping.

Parents who said their children did not take part in activities outside of school were asked why. The main reasons *recently arrived* refugees gave were the child had just started school, financial difficulties and transport problems (3 responses each). One person said their child did not take part in activities outside of school because of language problems.

Half of the 22 *established* refugees whose children did not take part in activities outside of school said their child or children were too young. Other reasons were a lack of time (4 responses), parents not being aware of activities (3 responses), cost (2 responses) and transport problems (2 responses).

14.9 DIFFICULTIES FOR CHILDREN IN NEW ZEALAND

Refugees may have difficulties when they come to New Zealand in terms of adapting and bringing up their children. Richman (1998) noted that conflicts may occur between generations in families. Girls are particularly at risk of conflict because traditionally many have led more restricted lives, although adolescent boys may also feel the pressure of conflicting expectations.

Parents were asked if they thought there were particular difficulties for girls and boys from their own ethnic group. Of the *recently arrived* refugees, six parents at six months and four at two years thought there were particular difficulties for girls. Fourteen out of 65 *established* refugees (from a range of nationalities) also thought there were particular difficulties for girls.

“Wearing a school uniform is hard for our girls because in our culture girls have to wear a long dress and cover their head. They can’t swim or mix with boys.”

Somali Quota refugee, six months

These difficulties often related to cultural and religious factors. Several parents mentioned that clothing was difficult for girls. Parents felt the way their girls were required to dress (such as wearing a head scarf or veil) often attracted unwanted attention from others and meant, for example, a school uniform may not be culturally appropriate. Another issue that was brought up related to socialising being difficult for girls from some cultures. Often, girls were not allowed out alone, were not allowed to socialise with other people and were not allowed to mix with boys. Some parents said that girls in New Zealand had a lot more freedom than they were used to and they found it difficult when their daughters wanted this same level of freedom.

“Clothing difference – girls usually wear big clothes that cover the whole body. This attracts attention from other people, sometimes abuse. Girls are not allowed to socialise with other people.

Somali Quota refugee, five years

A smaller number of parents said there were particular difficulties for boys in New Zealand. Of the *recently arrived* refugees, two parents at six months and three at two years said there were particular difficulties for boys. Four *established* refugees said there were particular difficulties for boys in New Zealand.

The difficulties for boys in New Zealand mostly related to cultural differences. Some parents said their sons found it very difficult balancing two cultures.

“They don't live by themselves before marriage; they obey their parents; they don't drink; they don't have relationships before marriage. These things are all very different from New Zealand culture.”

Iranian Convention refugee, six months

“There are cultural clashes, we parents expect them to stick themselves with our culture without understanding the new culture in hand, as a result they get confused. Parents need parent education for the sake of their children.”

Ethiopian Quota refugee, two years

14.9.1 Difficulties for parents bringing up children in New Zealand

Parents were asked whether they had experienced any difficulties bringing up children in New Zealand. Of the *recently arrived* refugees, seven people interviewed at six months and six people at two years said there were difficulties. Seventeen *established* refugees felt there were difficulties bringing up children in New Zealand (see Table 14.8).

Table 14.8 Difficulties for parents bringing up children in New Zealand.

Difficulties for parents bringing up children	Refugee type					
	Recently arrived				Established	
	6 months		2 years		n	%
	n	%	n	%		
Yes	7	13	6	13	17	24
No	47	87	39	87	53	76
Total	54	100	45	100	70	100

Note

1. Of the *recently arrived* refugees, four did not respond at six months and at two years, four did not know and one did not respond. One *established* refugee did not respond.

Participants were asked about the types of difficulties they had experienced bringing up children in New Zealand. At six months, two parents referred to financial difficulties, two said it was difficult for their children to maintain their language and culture and two said they worried about the freedom their children had in New Zealand. One parent said language was a problem as they were not able to communicate well with the teachers at their daughter’s school.

At two years, six parents said they had difficulties bringing up children in New Zealand. A variety of difficulties were discussed including one parent who said their child did not have enough confidence and therefore had no friends, another said they missed having their extended family to help with the children, one was

“Kids have more freedom here than in Iraq. I get worried about her sometimes, but to be honest New Zealand is a very peaceful country.”

Iraqi Family Reunion refugee, six months

concerned about the cost of bringing up children and one said immigration procedures had meant their child missed too much school.

“It took around one year to get visa for my daughter and I think it was a critical time for her. It was because Immigration was busy but I think New Zealand should give them better chance. Then they can start their education faster.”

Iraqi Family Reunion refugee, two years

“Different culture, culture clash. The lifestyle is different and the influence of the host culture is very strong, especially with young children. They tend to lose their own culture and take on the other culture.”

Somali Quota
refugee, five years

In total, 17 *established* refugee parents said they had difficulties bringing up their children in New Zealand. Though this is a relatively small number of parents, it is important to note the issues they raised. Seven parents talked about the difficulties of raising their children in a different culture and said that the New Zealand culture often clashed with their own.

Five parents commented on the New Zealand lifestyle being too liberal and children having a lack of discipline. Four parents said they found it financially difficult to bring up children in New Zealand.

“Some social difficulties regarding my oldest sons. They boys wanted to stay out (having some fun) for a longer time.”

Iraqi Quota refugee, five years

“They have to deal with certain social issues: having a boyfriend, getting a flatmate; having sex before marriage, or sleeping with other males before marriage; and going out for fun with friends but no family members.”

Iraqi Quota refugee, five years

14.9.2 Findings from focus groups

Refugee men and women who took part in focus groups said the way children were raised in New Zealand was very different to that which they were used to.

“Here in New Zealand, both father and child seem to be like friends, so the style of dealing with children has had to change.”

Burmese man,
focus group

Refugee men and women in focus groups discussed their experiences bringing up children in New Zealand. Many participants in these focus groups said raising children in New Zealand was very different from how children were raised in their home countries.

The women felt that a big difference was that children in New Zealand were given more freedom than children in their home countries. Iranian and Somali women said children could leave home earlier here than they would in their home countries and they felt it was difficult raising children when they wanted to leave home so early. In the Somali culture, children are expected to stay at home until they marry, and the Iranian women thought children should stay home until they were 20 years old. The Somali women felt that it was hard on their teenage children having a level of freedom that they were not used to in Somalia. Another area the Somali women found difficult was a lack of extended family to help with looking after children.

A group of Burmese men also found parenting styles in New Zealand very different from what they were used to. The main aspects of parenting they found different were that parents disciplined their children differently and that children were given more freedom in New Zealand. The men commented that discipline of children in Burma and Thailand often involved “some beating and much

shouting” and they were particularly strict on girls. One man said that he continued to discipline his child as he would have back home and this had caused some tension in his relationship with his wife. The men also felt children were a lot freer in New Zealand. They felt that it was important for them to adapt to this by supporting their children and giving them the opportunities to do what they wanted.

14.10 TEENAGERS

The teenage section of the questionnaire was answered by those aged between 13 and 19 years of age. It focused on experiences at school and any differences between the country the refugees came from and New Zealand. Of the *recently arrived* refugees, 26 teenagers answered this section at six months and 20 teenagers responded at two years.⁵⁹ Of the *established* refugees, 32 teenagers responded.

14.11 DIFFERENCES BEING A TEENAGER IN NEW ZEALAND

Recently arrived refugee teenagers at six months were asked if there were big differences being a teenager in New Zealand compared to in their home country. Of the 25 teenagers who responded, 19 said there were differences. What stood out the most for these teenagers was the freedom people in New Zealand experienced (10 responses).

Other differences noted by teenagers were more educational opportunities in New Zealand (8 responses) and more respect for parents and teachers in their own cultures (3 responses). Two people said they had a safer life in New Zealand.

“In our culture we have to give high respect to parents and teachers. There are some students who are naughty. They do not give respect to teachers. Sometimes they are playing in the classrooms.”

Burmese Quota refugee, six months

“There is more freedom here which is good and bad both. It is good to be able to do things but too much freedom has negative consequences.”

Afghan Quota refugee, six months

14.12 WHAT TEENAGERS LIKED ABOUT NEW ZEALAND

Teenagers were asked what they liked about being teenagers in New Zealand. The areas *recently arrived* teenagers liked about New Zealand were similar at six months and two years. These were:

- going to school and particular aspects of school such as the subjects they were studying;
- being able to play sport and take part in leisure activities (such as going to the beach);
- having friends; and
- having freedom and better opportunities.

⁵⁹ Only Quota and Family Reunion refugees were included in the *recently arrived* group as no Convention refugees were aged between 13 and 19 years.

“I like everything about being in New Zealand: school, going shopping, being at home with my family, playing outdoors with my friends, especially playing rugby.”

Iraqi Quota
refugee, five
years

When asked what they liked about being a teenager in New Zealand, 20 out of 32 *established* refugee teenagers said they liked going to school. Other common responses were that they liked playing sport (12 responses) and they liked being able to take part in recreational activities such as going to movies, parks and beaches (12 responses).

“Making new friends, getting to know more people, sport, soccer and ethnic language school.”

Ethiopian Quota refugee, five years

Teenagers who had been in New Zealand longer, specified a greater range of factors they liked about New Zealand. This could relate to them having grown up in New Zealand and therefore feeling more comfortable with New Zealand culture.

14.13 WHAT TEENAGERS DISLIKED ABOUT NEW ZEALAND

When teenagers were asked what they did not like about New Zealand, a common response was that there was nothing they disliked.

“At school, some students are naughty. They argue back to teachers. I never do this. The students do not give appropriate respect to teachers.”

Burmese Quota
refugee, six
months

At six months, a few teenagers felt that other teenagers in New Zealand showed a lack of respect in some areas. Three teenagers said that students often disrespected their teachers and the opportunity they had to study. Two people said other teenagers disrespected their parents. Two teenagers said they did not like the co-educational school system in New Zealand as they were used to single sex schools.

At their second interview, a number of teenagers commented on the behaviour of other teenagers in New Zealand including drinking and driving, and not respecting their parents or teachers. Three teenagers said they found it difficult to make friends in New Zealand and their lack of English made it difficult at school.

“Some people are cruel, because I am different from them.”

Ethiopian Quota
refugee, five
years

Of the small number of *established* refugee teenagers who cited aspects of New Zealand they did not like, the most common response was discrimination. Five teenagers said that they were teased or discriminated against because other people perceived them as different.

Other areas some *established* teenagers said they did not like were their family being too strict (3 responses) and school rules and homework (3 responses). Other single responses included not having friends, finding it hard to be accepted, and being far away from family.

Some of the things not liked about school were similar to other New Zealand teenagers (such as homework and school rules). Others point to differences based on their backgrounds.

14.14 TEENAGERS AT SCHOOL

14.14.1 What helped teenagers adjust to school in New Zealand

Recently arrived teenage refugees interviewed at six months were asked what had helped them adjust to school in New Zealand. The main factor that helped teenagers adjust to school was their teachers. Other important factors were friends from their ethnic group, their family, and knowing some English before they came.

“I have good and friendly teachers who encourage me all the time.”

Iraqi Family Reunion refugee, six months

After two years, teenagers said good teachers and special assistance with English language helped them adjust. Other important factors were making friends and being accepted by their peers and having the support of family and friends from their cultural group.

“Teachers as well as other students are very co-operative now and help me a lot. I’ve increased my knowledge of most subjects we are studying and regulations of schooling. Extra help in the class by most teachers.”

Iraqi Family Reunion refugee, two years

Many *established* refugee teenagers said friendly and helpful teachers helped them to adjust to school (20 responses). Eight individuals said that special classes or assistance (often with English language) helped them adjust and six individuals referred to support from other school staff.

Many recently arrived and established refugees said their teacher played an important role in helping them adjust to school.

“I have good teachers who understand my needs and ESOL class to help me with my English.”

Somali Quota refugee, five years

Twelve individuals said making friends helped them settle into school and a further 12 said family and friends provided much support. Other factors that helped teenagers to adjust included enjoying school (6 responses), improvement in English language ability (5 responses) and being able to play sports at school (2 responses).

14.14.2 School has become easier over time

Recently arrived teenagers interviewed at two years and *established* teenagers were asked if school had become easier or more difficult over time. Of 20 *recently arrived* teenagers, 17 said school had become easier. The main reason given for this was improved English language ability (13 responses). This was followed by making friends at school (8 responses). Other reasons teenagers gave were caring teachers, understanding more about the education system and knowing more about the place where they lived.

“Because my English is better now, and I have many friends at school.”

Iraqi Quota refugee, two years

Of 31 teenage *established* refugees, 28 said school had become easier for them over time. Twenty-two of these individuals said improvements in their English language ability had helped. Other factors that helped included making friends (11 responses), gaining confidence (5 responses), good teachers (4 responses) and understanding the school system (4 responses).

“Because I love going to school and all the work is normal because I understand everything and of course I can speak English very well.”

14.14.3 Difficulties adjusting to school in New Zealand

“Not being able to afford school expenses; bullying - but not much; not knowing the language.”

Somali Quota refugee, six months

Recently arrived refugees interviewed at six months were asked what things made it difficult for them to adjust to school in New Zealand. The main difficulty faced by teenagers when going to school was language (13 responses). Other difficulties discussed were teasing or problems relating to other students (4 responses) and cultural differences (3 responses). Two people referred to the distance they had to travel and one teenager was not able to afford school expenses. Three teenagers said they had experienced no difficulties and 3 people said they did not know.

“Former refugees discourage me and my new classmates act if we are dumb, as if we are fools.”

Ethiopian Quota refugee, six months

14.14.4 School more difficult over time

“My English is now better than before, but I still have major problems with it. I have problems with some teachers who could not recognise the years I lost in the refugee camps, and hence my lack of formal education.”

Somali Quota refugee, two years

Three *recently arrived* refugee teenagers interviewed at two years said school had become more difficult over time, although 8 teenagers discussed difficulties they had experienced at school. The main difficulties these teenagers discussed were with English language (4 responses) and their teachers not providing enough support (3 responses). One person said they found it difficult to socialise with their peers and one person referred to racism at school.

Three *established* refugees said school had become more difficult over time, although eight of the 31 teenagers talked about difficulties they had experienced. One of the factors these students talked about was bullying (3 responses). Two teenagers referred to English language difficulties and one participant mentioned health problems.

“When you are new to school there is bullying, but after you get to know them, no more.”

Sri Lankan Quota refugee, five years

14.14.5 Teenagers’ overall impressions of school

Nearly all teenagers interviewed said they liked school in New Zealand.

Teenagers were asked to rate how much they liked or disliked school on a five-point scale ranging from ‘like it very much’ to ‘dislike it very much’ (see Table 14.9). The majority of teenagers liked school.

Table 14.9 Whether teenagers liked or disliked school in New Zealand

Like/dislike school	Refugee type		
	<i>Recently arrived</i>		<i>Established</i>
	6 months	2 years	
	n	n	n
Like it very much	15	9	14
Like it	10	10	17
Neither like nor dislike it	0	1	1
Dislike it	1	0	0
Dislike it very much	0	0	0
Total	26	20	32

14.14.6 Impressions of school - findings from focus groups

Somali, Burmese and Afghan teenagers who took part in focus groups, all said they liked school in New Zealand because it was better than in their home countries. The Afghan teenagers specifically liked that they could choose which subjects to study whereas all subjects were compulsory in Afghanistan. The Burmese teenagers were proud to wear their school uniform and felt there was good discipline at their school, although the teaching style was more flexible than that to which they were used to. The Somali teenagers initially found it difficult to adjust to the New Zealand school system as it was quite different to what they were used to in Kenya. They now found it “ok” and were satisfied.

Burmese, Somali and Afghan teenagers who took part in focus groups said they liked school because it was better than in their home countries.

Many of the teenagers mentioned they liked having the opportunity to make friends at a multi-cultural school. Several teenagers said they found it easier to make friends with non-Pakeha students.

“When the boys arrive in New Zealand, they find it very hard to make friends with Pakeha. Instantly, they make friends with Maori, Islanders, Indians, but always feel there is a barrier with Pakeha. It takes a long time to break that barrier. They feel that Pakeha don’t want to know them. But once barrier removed and they get to know them, it’s more relaxed.”

Somali teenager, focus group

These teenagers also discussed aspects of school they found difficult. All of the teenagers discussed difficulties with language at school. One teenager mentioned this was not helped by classes being grouped by age rather than ability. He had little understanding of English and often did not understand what was being taught. While many of the teenagers were receiving extra assistance at school, the Somali teenagers felt they had a lack of support outside of school with their homework. Their parents were struggling to learn English themselves and were not able to provide the support the teenagers needed.

Both the Afghan and Somali teenagers talked about some instances of discrimination at school. This included name-calling by other students and, on one occasion, the Somali boys were told that they were not welcome in a computer class and to learn elsewhere. The Burmese teenagers said they had not experienced discrimination in the school environment.

“Get teased that he’s Bin Laden’s cousin ... They don’t know where he’s from. They think he’s Afghani, he’s an Arab from Saudi Arabia.”

An issue for the Burmese teenagers was that they felt other children at school did not respect the teachers. For example, they did not do their homework or did not pay attention in class.

Afghan teenager, focus group

“Give more respect to the teachers because sometimes children are getting to the teachers, take things away and hiding them somewhere. Even the children are playing with teachers, teachers are very nice and very patient and never blame the kids.”

Burmese teenager, focus group

14.15 TEENAGERS SETTLING COMPARED WITH PARENTS

The majority of teenagers felt it was easier for themselves than their parents to settle in New Zealand.

Teenagers were asked how easy it had been for them to settle in New Zealand compared to their parents (see Table 14.10). Almost all of the teenagers indicated it was easier for them than their parents.

Table 14.10 Ease of settlement for teenagers compared to parents

Ease of settlement	Refugee type		
	Recently arrived		Established
	6 months	2 years	
	n	n	n
Very much easier for you than parents	12	10	10
Easier for you than parents	12	6	17
No easier or harder for you than parents	1	2	1
More difficult for you than parents	1	1	1
Very much more difficult for you than parents	0	0	1
Total	26	20	32

Note

1. Of the *recently arrived* refugees at two years, one did not know.

“It is easier for me to settle because I am young, and I don’t have responsibility towards my family like my father and my mother. I can concentrate better and learn English faster and adapt quicker.”

Iraqi Quota refugee, six months

The reasons given for settling better were similar at six months and two years, mainly that they were younger and therefore could learn English faster. A number mentioned they went out more often and had more exposure to New Zealand culture than their parents (for example, at school) which also made it easier to settle. A few commented on the importance of having friends in New Zealand and some felt it was easier for themselves than their parents to make friends. Two people interviewed at six months and one person at two years said it was difficult for their parents to settle because they had a lot of worries. One teenager said it was easier for his parents to settle in New Zealand than himself because their English was better.

“Learning the language, knowing about how things are done here. Exposure to other cultures and to New Zealand way of life.”

Somali Quota refugee, two years

Nearly all of the *established* teenagers who said it was easier for themselves to settle commented on their ability to learn English quickly. Other important reasons were going to school in New Zealand, having made friends and being resettled in New Zealand when they were young. The teenagers put some context around these comments by specifying they only went to school and did not have to work or worry about financial issues or what they had left behind in their home country.

“Settling down is easy but getting along with people is hard.”

Iraqi Quota refugee, five years

“My parents had a life in their country of origin as well as country of asylum; and they could compare life here and there and found it difficult to settle with language difficulties. For me, because I came here young, my life started here.”

Ethiopian Quota refugee, five years

Two *established* teenagers said it was more difficult for themselves than their parents to settle in New Zealand. These individuals said they found it difficult to make friends in New Zealand.

Burmese and the Somali teenagers who took part in focus groups said it was easier for themselves than their parents in many respects. They felt they were better settled than their parents. Reasons given for this were being younger and parents having more concerns about money, family back home and daily life.

14.16 HELPING FAMILY TO SETTLE

One of the issues faced by teenagers is the requirement that they assist with the resettlement of their parents. *Recently arrived* teenagers interviewed at six months were asked if they had done any interpreting or translating for their parents since arriving in New Zealand.

Of the 27 individuals who responded to this question, 16 said they had interpreted or translated, ten said they had not and one did not know. Of those who had interpreted for their parents, nine teenagers had done this a few times, three interpreted weekly and three did so on a daily basis. The main situations teenagers interpreted or translated were with sponsors or volunteer service providers and answering the telephone at home. A number said they interpreted at the Ministry of Social Development's Work and Income (W&I) or when visiting the doctor or dentist. Three teenagers said they translated media and correspondence.

Sixteen out of 27 recently arrived teenagers at six months said they had interpreted or translated for their parents.

Teenagers interviewed at six months were also asked if they had helped their parents to settle in New Zealand in ways other than interpreting or translating. Fourteen out of the 27 teenagers said they had provided other help. This help was mainly with household chores, including shopping and looking after younger children. One person helped their parents with transport and one person helped with making appointments.

Recently arrived teenagers at two years and *established* teenagers were asked if they had done anything to help their family settle in New Zealand. Thirteen out of 20 teenagers at two years said they had helped their parents. Ten individuals said this help was with interpreting or translating. Other help was similar to what many teenagers would be expected to do such as housework, looking after younger children and helping with the shopping.

Twenty-two out of 32 *established* teenagers said they helped their parents. Sixteen of these individuals said they interpreted or translated, while other help was with household chores. Two teenagers said they helped their family by working part-time.

Teenagers who took part in focus groups mentioned interpreting for their parents. For the Burmese teenagers this was mostly translating letters and interpreting for sponsors. All of the Somali teenagers had translated for their parents, sometimes on a daily basis. This involved interpreting at the doctors, at W&I, when making appointments, when someone came to the house and some had translated for their teacher. Some Somali teenagers said they had missed school to do this.

Somali teenagers who took part in focus groups said they often interpreted for their parents. Some had missed school to do this.

14.17 ADVICE TO OTHER TEENAGERS

Teenagers were asked what advice they might give to other teenagers from their ethnic group coming to New Zealand. The most popular advice was to study hard and to make the most of school.

“I would like to advise them to be good teenagers and to attend school regularly.”

Ethiopian Quota refugee, six months

Of the *recently arrived* teenagers interviewed at six months, 14 individuals said they would advise other teenagers to work hard at school and 12 said it was important to show respect to parents, teachers and cultural traditions. At two years, teenagers focussed on making the most of school and studying for the future (17 responses). Three teenagers said it was important to show respect for parents and teachers and three said they would advise others to make good friends.

“To be courageous enough to go for the first approach to get friends. To be proud of themselves. To work hard and be responsible for themselves. To pay great attention to their studies.”

Ethiopian Quota refugee, two years

“Don't forget Vietnamese, take time to use it. Be proud of our traditions and culture.”

Vietnamese Quota refugee, five years

Many *established* teenagers said they would advise others to study hard and to learn for a better future (29 responses). A number focussed their advice on respect for parents, teachers and others (11 responses) and good and responsible behaviour (7 responses). A few teenagers said they would advise others to keep going even if things are hard, to make good friends, and to enjoy life. As well as this, they advised teenagers to be proud of their backgrounds. One teenager's advice to others was if you are new to school in New Zealand, you are likely to be bullied.

“Avoid bad influences, take new opportunities and choose good friends. If things go wrong, never give up, try again.”

Ethiopian Quota refugee, five years

Teenagers who took part in focus groups also mentioned studying hard and making the most of the education system. Burmese teenagers said they would advise others to bring a traditional Burmese costume to New Zealand as they are difficult to get here. Somali teenagers would recommend future refugees stand up for themselves, be patient, learn their rights in New Zealand, follow their dreams and ask for help from Somalis who have been here longer.

14.18 MAINTAINING CULTURE IN NEW ZEALAND

“I want to keep my culture, but I want to live and learn New Zealand culture as well. It's good to learn about New Zealand's different cultures.”

Afghan teenager, focus group

Burmese, Somali and Afghan teenagers who took part in focus groups all felt it was important to maintain their culture in New Zealand. The Afghan and Burmese teenagers also said they wanted to learn about the New Zealand culture. The Afghan teenagers performed their national dance at school on culture days and had traditional Afghan celebrations at home. The Burmese teenagers said they demonstrated their culture at an international student day.

The Somali teenagers said it was important to maintain their culture, including their dress, religion, food and language. These individuals said it was difficult to maintain some aspects of their culture as prayer rooms or other places to pray were not provided at school and classrooms were not suitable because they were

unclean. The teenagers said they did not pray at school because of these problems.

A specific issue for the Somali teenagers was, because they were brought up in a refugee camp in Kenya, they were not very familiar with the Somali culture. They found this difficult, particularly as they often did not know the answers to questions people asked about the Somali culture. Some mentioned that they would like to learn to read and write Somali and would take part in classes if offered.

“Religion is the most important thing, core to being Somali.”

Somali teenager, focus group

14.19 SUMMARY

The majority of participants’ children between the ages of five and 17 years were attending school in New Zealand. Only a small number of participants said their children had experienced problems settling into school. Often this was because of a lack of English language ability, while a few said their children had difficulties making friends or struggled to fit in. The most important factors participants identified in assisting their children to settle into school were good and helpful teachers and extra assistance with English language. A number of participants said their children received extra help learning English at school, often in an ESOL class or through individualised assistance while some *established* refugees mentioned after school classes. Aside from help with English, participants’ children received little other assistance at school.

The range of activities that refugee children participated in outside of school indicates that most of them were settling effectively and also integrating into New Zealand society. Extra curricula activities such as sport, music and drama are usually expensive and demand extra effort even for average income families. Appropriate support for families enables young people to become more active in their schools and local communities, enhancing their development of networks of friendships and contacts in the school and community.

Most participants said they were satisfied with their children’s schooling. An issue that arose in focus groups was that refugee parents often did not understand the school system. This could be very frustrating if, for example, parents could not help their children with homework. Another issue raised related to Somali children who had not attended school before coming to New Zealand and therefore experienced difficulties learning the basics in mainstream classes. Although additional classes for refugee children are one way to address this, there is a possibility that this would create more difficulties for the children.

Some participants felt there were particular difficulties for girls, with more *established* than *recently arrived* refugees responding this way. Often this related to dress. Others said girls in New Zealand had a lot more freedom than they were used to and found it difficult when their daughters wanted this same freedom. A smaller number felt there were particular difficulties for boys in New Zealand.

Only a small number of participants discussed particular difficulties bringing up children in New Zealand. Again, more *established* than *recently arrived*

refugees responded this way and many of them said cultural differences made it difficult to raise children in New Zealand. Participants in focus groups said that raising children in New Zealand was very different to what they were used to. A specific issue raised related to children having a lot more freedom in New Zealand, such as leaving home before they are married and parents being less strict.

The freedom that people in New Zealand experience was also an issue for teenage participants. The teenagers liked that they could go to school, play sport, have friends and have freedom and better opportunities here. Many teenagers said there was nothing they disliked about New Zealand, although a few felt other New Zealand teenagers showed a lack of respect to their parents and teachers. A few *established* teenagers said they disliked being teased or discriminated against. In focus groups, teenage participants also discussed discrimination at school.

Overall, most teenagers liked school. Friendly and helpful teachers and extra assistance with English language were important in helping them settle into school. In focus groups, teenagers said they liked having the opportunity to make friends at a multi-cultural school.

Most teenagers felt it was easier for themselves than their parents to settle in New Zealand. The main reason given for this was the teenagers were younger and could therefore learn English faster. Many teenagers had interpreted for their parents often with sponsors, volunteer support people, at W&I or when visiting the doctor or dentist.

Many teenage participants said they would advise other teenagers from their ethnic group coming to New Zealand to study hard and make the most of the education system in New Zealand.

15 SOCIAL NETWORKS

15.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter looks at how refugees form networks with the wider New Zealand society. Participants were asked about the importance of making friends, how they met new people and any difficulties they had experienced making friends in New Zealand. Similar questions were asked about joining clubs and groups. The topics covered in this chapter include:

- the context around social networks;
- making friends by six months;
- friends at two and five years; and
- joining clubs and groups.

Key themes

- Eight in ten *recently arrived* refugees felt it was important to make friends in New Zealand and a similar proportion said they had made friends.
 - The main ways participants met new people in New Zealand were through existing friends and family, followed by at school or through other study.
 - Thirty-one percent of *recently arrived* refugees interviewed at two years and 28 percent of *established* refugees said they had found it difficult to make friends in New Zealand. This was often due to language or communication barriers.
 - One third of *recently arrived* refugees interviewed at six months felt it was not important to join clubs or groups. A further 15 percent said it was neither important nor unimportant and 8 percent did not know. Some participants did not understand the question.
 - Thirty-three percent of *established* refugees belonged to a club or group in New Zealand. Most commonly this was an ethnic association.
-

15.2 CONTEXT

In order to combat the various problems they face in the country of resettlement, refugees need efficient associations and social networks. According to Wahlbeck (1998) the existence of strong ethnic communities in terms of both formal and informal associations within communities, is important for the process of resettlement. Other important networks include church and wider community associations as well as links with the host community.

The types of support that refugees need through wider social networks evolves over time. Initially support comes from family already in New Zealand, non-government organisations (NGOs), and from refugees' own ethnic community (as discussed in Chapter 7). As time goes on, developing a network among other New Zealanders becomes more important. These networks may develop through people from the host community who are helping them to resettle, such as home tutors, volunteer support people and networks already developed by their family members in New Zealand. For those in work, the workplace is important for

Social networks can help refugees combat the various problems they face in the country of resettlement.

establishing networks as is the school for children and teenagers. As well as providing emotional support, social networks provide an opportunity to interact with English speakers and improve English skills and may provide job opportunities for those seeking work.

15.3 MAKING FRIENDS AT SIX MONTHS

Recently arrived refugees interviewed at six months were asked a series of questions about making friends in New Zealand to find out how important it was for them to make friends in the early stages of their resettlement and about their experiences making friends in New Zealand. These findings are discussed below.

15.3.1 IMPORTANCE OF MAKING FRIENDS

Recently arrived refugees interviewed at six months were asked how important it was for them to make friends in New Zealand at this stage of their resettlement (see Table 15.1). Eighty-two percent of those who responded to this question felt it was important or very important. Seventy-five percent of Quota refugees responded this way compared to 87 percent of Family Reunion and 89 percent of Convention refugees.

“It is good to have a friend rather than being alone. This may really help me to know more about life in New Zealand.”

Ethiopian
Quota
refugee, six
months

Participants who felt it was important to make friends gave a variety of reasons for this. The main reasons were:

- for social networks (39 responses);
- because it is important or good to have friends (29 responses);
- to learn from them (23 responses);
- to learn about the ‘Kiwi’ lifestyle (22 responses);
- to improve English (21 responses);
- to help each other (15 responses);
- to be part of a wider community (15 responses);
- not wanting to be lonely (14 responses); and
- to exchange cultures (13 responses).

“I have my wife’s family which is a big one. They are good friends and that’s all I need.”

Iraqi Family
Reunion
refugee, six
months

Seven percent of *recently arrived* refugees at six months felt it was not important to make friends and a further 10 percent did not have strong feelings either way. Twenty-five percent of Quota refugees commented that it was not important to make friends or it was neither important nor unimportant.

Participants who did not think it was important to make friends often gave similar reasons for their responses. While a number did not know why they felt this way, others said they had their families or already had friends. Others said they were too busy to make friends.

Table 15.1 Importance of making friends for *recently arrived* refugees interviewed at six months

Importance of making friends	Refugee type							
	Quota		Convention		Family Reunion		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Very important	27	34	12	33	32	46	71	38
Important	33	41	20	56	28	41	81	44
Neither important nor unimportant	11	14	3	8	5	7	19	10
Not important	8	10	1	3	3	4	12	6
Not at all important	1	1	0	0	1	1	2	1
Total	80	100	36	100	69	100	185	100

Note

1. This question was not asked of the 16 people who took part in the pilot survey. Seven (including six Quota refugees) did not know and one did not respond.

15.3.2 Whether participants had made friends

Overall, 78 percent of *recently arrived* refugees interviewed at six months said they had made friends since arriving in New Zealand. There was not much variation between refugee groups (72 percent of Quota, 80 percent of Convention and 84 percent of Family Reunion refugees).

When participants who had made friends in New Zealand were asked how they met these people, 61 percent referred to the importance of existing friends, relatives and neighbours (see Table 15.2). Not surprisingly, more Family Reunion refugees than Quota or Convention refugees said they met friends this way. Forty-four out of 56 Family Reunion refugees said they met friends through existing friends and family, compared to 33 out of 69 Quota refugees and 20 out of 33 Convention refugees. Four in ten participants said they met friends at school or through other study or training. Around half of Quota refugees met friends this way compared to eight out of 33 Convention refugees.

Sixty-one percent of *recently arrived* refugees at six months said they met friends through existing friends, relatives or neighbours.

A number of Quota and Family Reunion refugees said they met friends through their sponsors (43 percent of Quota refugees and 45 percent of Family Reunion refugees). Thirty-six percent of participants said they met friends through an ethnic group or association. Quota refugees were particularly likely to meet friends through an ethnic group or association with nearly half indicating they met friends this way. One third of participants said they met friends through a religious group (such as a church). Around one half of Convention refugees met friends this way compared to 29 percent of Quota refugees and 24 percent of Family Reunion refugees. For Convention refugees, these networks may have been formed while they were in the process of claiming asylum. Asylum seekers often turn to organisations such as churches to assist with their claim for asylum and to provide moral and financial support and to assist with presenting their case to the New Zealand Immigration Service (NZIS).

Table 15.2 Ways recently arrived refugees at six months met friends

How met friends	Refugee type							
	Quota		Convention		Family Reunion		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Friends, relatives/neighbours	33	48	20	61	44	76	97	61
School or study/training	37	54	8	24	19	33	64	40
Through sponsor	30	43	2	6	26	45	58	36
Ethnic group	32	46	8	24	17	29	57	36
Religious group	20	29	17	52	14	24	51	32
Sports or other club	8	12	1	3	0	0	9	6
Home tutor	6	9	1	3	0	0	7	4
Other	2	3	5	15	5	9	12	8
Total participants	69		33		58		160	

Note

1. Participants could give multiple responses so columns do not add to 100 percent.

15.3.3 Difficulties making friends

Recently arrived refugees interviewed at six months were asked if they had experienced difficulties making new friends in New Zealand. Just over one quarter of this group (27 percent) said they had experienced difficulties (see Table 15.3).

When asked about the types of difficulties experienced, 46 of the 57 refugees who had experienced problems referred to language difficulties. Fifteen individuals said cultural differences made it difficult to make friends. A few said they did not have enough opportunities to meet people, for example, they did not go out much or were not employed. Four participants referred to other New Zealanders being too busy and two people said they were too busy themselves to make friends.

“I don't go out much and I don't know the area very well, I just go to church and the shops.”

Iraqi Family Reunion refugee, six months

Table 15.3 Whether recently arrived refugees at six months had difficulties making friends

Difficulties making friends	Refugee type							
	Quota		Convention		Family Reunion		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Yes	32	33	11	27	14	20	57	27
No	64	67	30	73	57	80	151	73
Total	96	100	41	100	71	100	208	100

Note

1. One did not respond.

Just over one quarter of recently arrived refugees interviewed at six months said they had experienced difficulties making friends in New Zealand.

“Language barriers - I can't express myself clearly. Differences in bringing up families between my country and New Zealand.”

Iraqi Family Reunion refugee, six months

15.4 EXPERIENCES OF *RECENTLY ARRIVED* REFUGEES AT TWO YEARS AND *ESTABLISHED* REFUGEES

15.4.1 Ease of making friends

While *recently arrived* refugees interviewed at six months were asked generally about making friends in New Zealand, *recently arrived* refugees at two years and *established* refugees were asked about ease of making friends with people outside of their ethnic group (see Table 15.4). Of the *recently arrived* refugees, 46 percent had found it easy to make friends, 22 percent found it neither easy nor difficult and 31 percent found it difficult or very difficult. Seventy-one percent of Convention refugees said it was easy to make friends, compared to 46 percent of Family Reunion and 37 percent of Quota refugees.

Nearly half of *established* refugees said it had been easy to make friends with people outside of their ethnic group. A further 23 percent said they had found it neither easy nor difficult, while 28 percent found it difficult or very difficult.

Forty-six percent of *recently arrived* refugees interviewed at two years and 49 percent of *established* refugees said they found it easy to make friends in New Zealand.

Table 15.4 Ease of making friends outside of ethnic group

Ease of making friends	Refugee type									
	Recently arrived (2 years)								Established	
	Quota		Convention		Family Reunion		Total		n	%
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%		
Very easy	3	4	6	19	4	8	13	8	17	9
Easy	24	33	16	52	20	38	60	38	73	40
Neither easy nor difficult	20	27	6	19	9	17	35	22	42	23
Difficult	17	23	3	10	14	27	34	22	39	21
Very difficult	9	12	0	0	5	10	14	9	13	7
Total	73	100	31	100	52	100	156	100	184	100

Note

1. Of the *recently arrived* refugees at two years, four did not know and two did not respond. Of the *established* refugees, five did not respond.

Participants were asked why they had found it easy or difficult to make friends in New Zealand. *Recently arrived* and *established* refugees gave similar responses (Table 15.5). For those who found it easy to make friends, important reasons were the ability to speak English, New Zealanders being friendly and being a sociable person. A number said they met friends at school or through other study and some met friends at work.

“Because New Zealanders are very friendly and hospitable to people from other countries and cultures.”

“Language is a very important tool for communication with others. I can speak more than one language. My English speaking helps me to talk to people on courses or at work.”

Iranian Convention refugee, two years

Iraqi Quota refugee, five years

A number of participants who found it difficult to make friends said this was because of language difficulties. Others referred to cultural difficulties and a number of *recently arrived* participants said they spent little time outside of their own ethnic communities. *Established* refugees raised the issue of New Zealand society not being particularly friendly to them. Five *established* refugees felt they were too old to make friends.

A number of participants who said they found it neither easy nor difficult to make friends gave similar responses to those who found it difficult. Some referred to English language difficulties and others said they did not have the time or opportunities to make friends.

“To make friends with white New Zealanders is extremely difficult due to their lack of interest in making contact with third world people. But my best friends have been other immigrants and foreigners like myself, even foreigners from English, Scottish and Irish background had much better attitudes towards me. I had only difficulty with white New Zealand-born people.”

Iranian Quota refugee, five years

“Making friends depends on the way you have access to meeting people, like in school, workplaces and so on.”

Ethiopian Quota refugee, five years

“It’s a closed society, Kiwi’s knowledge about Africans is less. I met some people running away from us (dark-skinned). Some people think of us as if we are not healthy people.”

Ethiopian Quota refugee, five years

“People around are open; the difficulty lies in my lack of English. I don’t have the ability to express myself, my emotional feelings to others.”

Vietnamese Quota refugee, five years

Table 15.5 Reasons participants found it easy or difficult to make friends in New Zealand

Refugee type	
Recently arrived (2 years)	Established
<p>Easy to make friends</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ New Zealand people are friendly (37) ▪ Able to speak English (17) ▪ Met people through school or other study (16) ▪ Sociable person (15) ▪ Met people through work (4) <p>Neither easy nor difficult</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Language or communication difficulties (13) ▪ Not enough time (11) ▪ Spend time with own ethnic group (4) ▪ Cultural barriers (3) <p>Difficult to make friends</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Language or communication difficulties (40) ▪ Spend time with own community or have no contact outside of community (16) ▪ Cultural barriers (9) ▪ Busy at home (5) 	<p>Easy to make friends</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Able to speak English (33) ▪ Sociable person (29) ▪ New Zealanders are friendly and approachable (26) ▪ Met people through school or other study (22) ▪ Met people through work (7) <p>Neither easy nor difficult</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Busy at home or no opportunities (12) ▪ Lack of English language ability (11) ▪ Already have friends in own ethnic community (7) ▪ Cultural barriers (5) ▪ Not interested in making friends (3) <p>Difficult to make friends</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Language difficulties (35) ▪ New Zealand society unfriendly (17) ▪ Cultural barriers (9) ▪ Prefer own community members (4) ▪ Too old to make friends (5)

Note

1. Participants could give multiple responses.

15.4.2 Ways of meeting people

Recently arrived refugees at two years were asked how they generally met people outside of their ethnic group in New Zealand (see Table 15.6). The most common way this group met people was through existing friends, relatives and

neighbours, with just over half using this method. This was a particularly common method for Family Reunion refugees with more than three quarters indicating they met people this way. Forty-seven percent of participants said they met people through school or other study with sixty-one percent of Quota refugees meeting people this way.

Around half of the 32 Convention refugees said they met people at work. A number of the 74 Quota refugees met people through the Refugee and Migrant Service (RMS) or their sponsor (20 and 18 individuals respectively).

Fifty-five percent of recently arrived refugees interviewed at two years said they met people through existing friends and family.

Table 15.6 Ways recently arrived refugees at two years met people outside their ethnic group

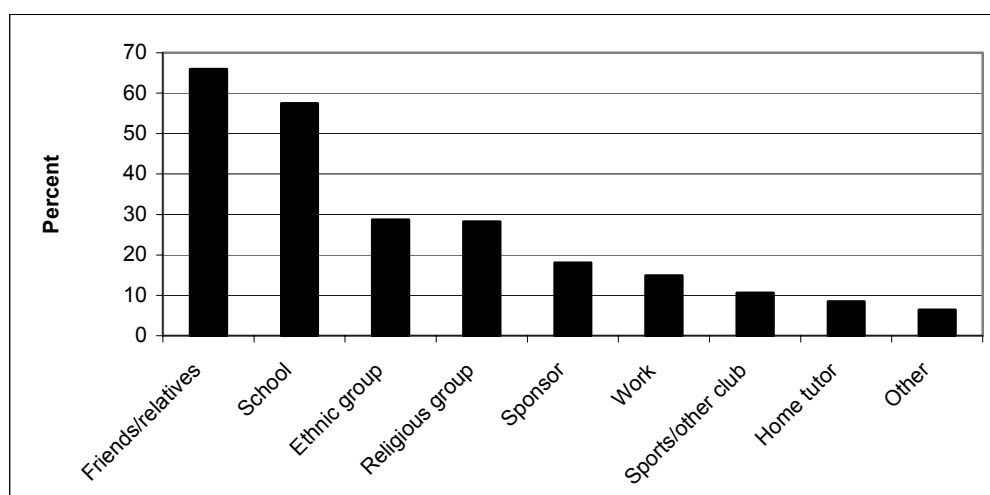
How met friends	Refugee type							
	Quota		Convention		Family Reunion		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Friends, relatives, neighbours	27	36	20	63	37	77	84	55
School/other study	45	61	12	38	16	33	73	47
Work	3	4	15	47	5	10	23	15
RMS support worker	20	27	1	3	0	0	21	14
Sponsor	18	24	0	0	1	2	19	12
Religious group	4	5	8	25	5	10	17	11
Home tutor	7	9	0	0	1	2	8	5
Sports club/other club	5	7	1	3	2	4	8	5
Ethnic group	4	5	0	0	1	2	5	3
Other	3	4	2	6	9	19	14	9
Total participants	74		32		48		154	

Note

1. Eight did not know.
2. Participants could give multiple responses so columns do not add to 100 percent.

Figure 15.1 shows the ways *established* refugees met new people in New Zealand. As with *recently arrived* refugees, the most common way was through friends, relatives and neighbours, with two thirds of *established* refugees indicating they met people this way. They also met people at school or through other study (57 percent). Ethnic and religious groups also provided an important avenue for refugees to meet people with around three in ten participants meeting others in these ways.

Figure 15.1 How established refugees met new people in New Zealand *n=188*



Note

1. One did not respond.
2. Participants could give multiple responses so does not add to 100 percent.

15.5 JOINING CLUBS AND GROUPS

Another way to form social networks in New Zealand is to join clubs and groups. Clubs and groups provide a means for people with a shared interest to interact and may also provide links to various other communities and networks.

The research associates suggested the answers to this question be treated with some caution as in some cases participants did not understand what clubs and groups were. For example, some participants thought the question referred to night clubs. The number of participants who indicated they ‘did not know’ in Table 15.7 testify to this. It is also important to consider the cultural background of the participants. In many of the countries that refugees come from belonging to a club or group is elitist, whereas many participants are from less privileged backgrounds. Refugees may not be familiar with clubs and groups in New Zealand although some may set up home-country based associations.

15.5.1 Importance of joining clubs and groups at six months

When asked about the importance of joining clubs and groups, 44 percent of *recently arrived* refugees said this was important or very important (see Table 15.7). The main reasons given for this were to make friends and get to know people (19 responses), to take part in an activity (13 responses), to maintain culture (8 responses) and for social gatherings (8 responses).

Thirty-three percent of *recently arrived* refugees felt it was not important to join clubs or groups. These individuals often commented they were not interested (16 responses) or were too busy (12 responses). Nine individuals did not know why it was not important. Sixteen percent of participants did not have strong feelings either way. A number of these individuals said they had their own community or family and were satisfied with this.

“We have a Karen community group. We want to maintain our culture and show our culture to Kiwis.”

Burmese Quota refugee, six months

“At this stage, joining groups or clubs doesn't seem important to me. There are other things to be considered and we have limited finance and time.”

Iraqi Quota refugee, six months

There was not much variation by refugee group in the proportion who felt it was important to join clubs and groups. Although, more Quota refugees (38 percent) felt it was not important to join clubs or groups than Convention (33 percent) or Family Reunion refugees (28 percent).

Table 15.7 Importance of joining groups and clubs for recently arrived refugees at six months

Importance of joining groups/clubs	Refugee type							
	Quota		Convention		Family Reunion		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Very important	18	21	4	11	12	18	34	18
Important	21	24	12	33	15	23	48	26
Neither important nor unimportant	8	9	7	19	13	20	28	15
Not important	26	30	12	33	15	23	53	28
Not at all important	7	8	0	0	3	5	10	5
Don't know	6	7	1	3	8	12	15	8
Total	86	100	36	100	66	100	188	100

Note

1. Five did not respond. Those who did not know are included in the table.
2. This question was not asked of the 16 people who took part in the pilot survey.

15.5.2 Ease of joining clubs and groups

Table 15.8 shows how easy or difficult *recently arrived* refugees interviewed at two years and *established* refugees found it to join groups or clubs in New Zealand. Of the *recently arrived* refugees, 20 percent said it was easy to join clubs or groups, 24 percent said it was neither easy nor difficult and 31 percent said they found it difficult. A further 26 percent of participants did not know.

There were some differences between refugee groups. More Quota and Family Reunion refugees said they found it difficult to join clubs and groups (31 and 45 percent respectively) compared to only 3 percent of Convention refugees.

Around one third of *established* refugees said they found it easy to join clubs or groups. Twenty-seven percent said it was neither easy nor difficult and 20 percent said it was difficult.

Table 15.8 Ease of joining clubs and groups

Ease of joining clubs/ groups	Refugee type									
	Recently arrived (2 years)								Established	
	Quota		Convention		Family Reunion		Total			
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Very easy	0	0	2	6	1	2	3	2	12	6
Easy	13	18	8	25	7	13	28	18	48	26
Neither easy nor difficult	17	23	6	19	15	28	38	24	50	27
Difficult	14	19	1	3	16	30	31	20	20	11
Very difficult	9	12	0	0	8	15	17	11	16	9
Don't know	20	27	15	47	6	11	41	26	40	22
Total	73	100	32	100	53	100	158	100	186	100

Note

1. Those who did not know are included in the table.
2. Four *recently arrived* refugees did not respond. Three *established* refugees did not respond.

“I haven't so good communication skills. I'm busy with my own group visiting them. I believe that could cost me some money.”

Iraqi Family Reunion refugee, two years

Of the 48 *recently arrived* refugees who said it was difficult to join clubs or groups, the main concern related to English language difficulties (26 responses). Other concerns related to the expense of joining (17 responses), a lack of time (7 responses), being too old or unwell (4 responses) and having young children to look after (3 responses).

“I have young children and also my English isn't good to communicate with people.”

Kurdish Quota refugee, two years

Eight people referred to cultural factors. This included some individuals who referred to cultural differences between New Zealanders and themselves and others who said it was not appropriate for women from some cultures to join clubs or groups.

“Culturally it's difficult for a woman to join a club or group - I mean from our ethnic group.”

Afghan Family Reunion refugee, two years

Many of the 38 individuals who said it was neither easy nor difficult to join clubs or groups said this was because they had not tried to join them.

“The host society is rather open to receiving people from other cultural backgrounds”

Somali Quota refugee, five years

Common reasons given by the 60 *established* refugees who said it was easy to join clubs or groups was they had an income (17 responses) or they could speak English (16 responses). Others referred to New Zealand being a free country (11 responses). Ten individuals said they were a friendly person and six said New Zealanders were friendly. Some said because they were a member of a community it was easy to join a club or group.

“It's a free country, and if you can afford to pay the fees and spend money you can go anywhere you like. For me, I'm a member of the community committee, I go to church. I can speak some English, so it's okay.”

Iraqi Quota refugee, five years

Fifty *established* refugees said it was neither easy nor difficult to join groups or clubs and 40 said they did not know. These individuals often gave similar reasons for their responses. Forty-five said they had not tried or were not interested in joining groups or clubs. Some said they did not have enough time or money and a few others said they were busy with their own families or communities.

Thirty-six *established* refugees said they had found it difficult to join clubs or groups with the main difficulties relating to English language ability (13 responses) and lack of income (12 responses). Nine individuals cited cultural differences and nine said they were too busy with their families to join clubs or groups.

15.5.3 Clubs and groups joined

Twenty percent of *recently arrived* refugees at six months said they had joined clubs or groups since coming to New Zealand. At two years, 12 percent said they currently belonged to a club or a group.

At six months, around half of those who belonged to a club or group were involved in a religious group. Sixteen participants at six months belonged to an ethnic group and eight belonged to a sports club. Twenty individuals belonged to clubs or groups at two years. Nine participants said they belonged to a sports club and seven participants belonged to an ethnic group. Fewer participants said they were involved in a religious group at two years (4 individuals) compared to six months (21 individuals). However, it is likely the numbers involved in religious groups are under-reported. As discussed in Chapter 17, many participants said that an important way that they maintained their culture and kept in contact with members of their ethnic group in New Zealand was through religious observance. Perhaps some participants did not define practising their religion or belonging to a church as belonging to a 'club or group'.

15.5.4 Established refugees

One third of the 188 *established* refugees who responded to this question said they belonged to a group or club in New Zealand.⁶⁰ Table 15.9 shows the types of clubs and groups to which these individuals belonged. Ethnic groups were the most popular, with 42 individuals indicating they belonged to an ethnic group. Fifteen individuals said they belonged to a religious group and 13 belonged to a sports club. As with *recently arrived* refugees, it is likely the number involved in religious groups is under-reported. A smaller number said they belonged to hobby or cultural groups, youth groups and job-related or professional groups.

“I haven't thought of this idea, but going out and joining clubs requires communication skills and money; I can't afford that.”

Iraqi Quota refugee, five years

⁶⁰ One *established* refugee did not respond.

Table 15.9 Types of clubs and groups to which *established* refugees belonged

Type of club/group	Total n
Ethnic association	42
Religious group	15
Sports club	13
Youth group	3
Hobby/cultural club	2
Other	5
Total participants	62

Note

1. Participants could give multiple responses.

15.5.5 Belonging to clubs and groups by gender

A higher proportion of men than women belonged to clubs or groups. Of the *recently arrived* refugees interviewed at six months, 17 percent of women and 22 percent of men said they had joined clubs or groups since coming to New Zealand. The corresponding figures at two years were 9 percent of women and 15 percent of men. Twenty-eight percent of female *established* refugees said they belonged to a club or group compared to 38 percent of males.

15.6 SUMMARY

The types of support refugees need evolves, and a network outside of family and ethnic communities is likely to become more important over time. Around eight in ten *recently arrived* refugees felt it was important to make friends in New Zealand and a similar proportion had actually made friends. Participants said it was important to make friends for social networks, because friends are important and to learn from them (including learning about the ‘Kiwi’ lifestyle and learning English).

Common ways participants met new people were through friends, relatives and neighbours and through school and study. Other common methods were through their sponsor (particularly at six months) and through ethnic and religious groups. Some *recently arrived* refugees interviewed at two years and some *established* refugees said they met new people at work. More Family Reunion refugees than other participants met friends through family and friends already in New Zealand, while Quota refugees were more likely than other participants to meet friends through an ethnic association. Many Convention refugees said they met people through a religious group (perhaps because they formed these support networks when their claims were being determined). That a number of participants met people through school and study, highlights the importance of these methods not only for learning but also for making links with people from other communities.

Around one quarter of *recently arrived* refugees said they had experienced difficulties making friends in New Zealand, with Quota refugees indicating slightly more difficulties than other participants and Family Reunion refugees indicating the least. The difficulty most often cited was with English language.

Around three in ten *recently arrived* refugees interviewed at two years and *established* refugees said it was difficult to make friends outside of their own ethnic group. A further 22 percent of *recently arrived* and 23 percent of *established* refugees said it was neither easy nor difficult, but then indicated difficulties when asked to explain further. Difficulties often related to poor English language ability. At two years a number of participants said it was difficult to make friends outside of their ethnic group because they did not spend much time outside of their own community. A number of *established* refugees said other New Zealanders were not very friendly and some raised issues of discrimination.

In response to the questions about joining groups and clubs, many participants indicated they did not know, perhaps because they did not understand what clubs and groups were. Some participants may not have considered joining clubs or groups, because in their former countries only the 'elite' did so. More *established* than *recently arrived* refugees said they belonged to clubs and groups. Perhaps after five years in New Zealand, this became more important and they had had the opportunity to find out more about clubs and groups and had a better understanding of the concept as used in the New Zealand context. The main type of group they belonged to were ethnic groups, followed by religious groups and sports clubs. Religion is much more important to participants than is highlighted in this chapter (see Chapter 17).

16 DISCRIMINATION

16.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines participants' experiences of discrimination in New Zealand, including the situations in which discrimination occurred and whether participants sought help. The topics covered in this chapter include:

- the context around discrimination;
- experiences of discrimination;
- situations where discrimination occurred;
- whether participants sought help; and
- findings from focus groups.

Key themes

- ➔ In focus groups with service providers, participants felt refugees were often the target of racism and discrimination, generally fuelled by ignorance.
 - ➔ Less discrimination was reported in the interviews. Fourteen *recently arrived* refugees interviewed at six months reported experiencing discrimination since arriving in New Zealand. Fourteen *established* refugees reported experiencing discrimination in the month prior to being interviewed.
 - ➔ Situations where discrimination was reported included while trying to find a job, poor treatment at Work and Income (W&I), at school, acts of abuse from the general public and when finding housing. Aspects of discrimination have been discussed in other chapters such as housing, children and teenagers and labour force participation. It was felt that women in particular could be discriminated against because of the way they dressed.
-

16.2 CONTEXT

Prejudice towards refugees by members of the host community presents a significant barrier to resettlement (Elliott, 1997). Studies in the United States, as well as New Zealand, have noted the prejudice that some Muslim cultures, and women in particular, face as a result of the way they dress and their religious practices (Bihi, 1999 and Chile, 2002). Matsuoka and Sorenson (1999) have argued that people often have difficulties understanding the reasons why refugees have had to leave their home countries. This can fuel racist attitudes towards refugees if people have the perception they have chosen to move and are exploiting opportunities in the host country.

It is important to note that discrimination can at times be the recipient's perception of a situation, rather than an intentional occurrence. However, whether real or perceived, discrimination has negative impacts on well-being.

As part of a six-year project looking at family and community impacts of migration, the Migration Research Group at Waikato University are examining issues of racial and ethnic discrimination towards Somali and other refugees. Guerin (2004) notes a range of situations in which discrimination may occur including at school, at government departments and on the street. Some of the

actions noted include assumptions people make about refugees, not employing refugees, name calling and bullying, racist remarks and physical abuse.

Discrimination towards refugees in New Zealand was discussed in focus groups with service providers. They felt refugees in New Zealand were often the target of racism or discrimination that was generally fuelled by ignorance and a lack of understanding about the issues facing refugees. A point to bear in mind when interpreting the data in this section is an issue raised by service providers. They commented that many refugees consider themselves lucky to be in New Zealand because their situation here is much better than it was in their former country. Because of this they may not want to report being discriminated against or they may feel that it is not occurring. Chile (2002) notes that most refugees are not able to complain about discrimination because they do not know how, do not have the language skills, or they believe it will impact their residence status or ability to sponsor family to New Zealand. It is therefore possible the discrimination discussed in this chapter is under-reported. What is reported in this chapter reflects the participants' responses.

16.3 EXPERIENCES OF DISCRIMINATION

Nearly all of the refugees who said they had experienced discrimination were from the Middle East or the Horn of Africa.

Recently arrived refugees were asked if they felt someone had discriminated against them in New Zealand because of their ethnic group. At six months, participants were asked if they had experienced discrimination since coming to New Zealand and at two years, participants were asked if they had experienced discrimination in the past month.

Fourteen out of 207 participants interviewed at six months felt they had been discriminated against because of their ethnic group.⁶¹ Eight of these individuals were Quota refugees, three were Convention refugees and three were Family Reunion refugees. Of those who had experienced discrimination, seven were from the Middle East, six from the Horn of Africa and one was from South Asia.

At two years, seven participants felt they had been discriminated against in the past month. Four of these individuals were Quota refugees, two were Family Reunion refugees and one was a Convention refugee. Four of these participants were from the Middle East and three were from the Horn of Africa. There were no differences by gender.

Of the 186 *established* refugees who responded to the question about discrimination, 14 said they had experienced discrimination in the past month. Eleven of these individuals were men and three were women. Seven were from the Middle East and seven from the Horn of Africa.

It is useful to compare these findings with those relating to migrants in general. In recent research looking at the experiences of migrants in New Zealand, one in five migrants reported experiencing discrimination at six months and at 18 months after arrival (Dunstan, Boyd and Crichton, 2004). Migrants from Asia were more likely than those from Europe, South Africa and North America or the Pacific to report discrimination. A much smaller proportion of participants in the

⁶¹ One person did not know and one did not respond.

current study reported discrimination. While it may be the case that only a small proportion experienced discrimination, this is more likely to be a result of under-reporting. Under-reporting may be due to the reasons discussed above such as, refugees feeling lucky to be in New Zealand. Also, few were in the labour market where discrimination is more commonly experienced.

Although only a comparatively small number of participants said they had experienced discrimination when directly questioned about this, it is important to note that issues of discrimination arose in response to other questions. Also, as discussed below (16.6), participants in focus groups often raised issues of discrimination towards refugees. Some parents had concerns about their children being teased due to being considered ‘different’ and others discussed unwanted attention their daughters received because of the way they dressed. Some teenagers discussed being teased at school and Afghan and Somali teenagers in focus groups gave some very obvious examples of discrimination (see Chapter 14).

Some *established* refugees said they had difficulties finding housing because of discrimination (see Chapter 6). A number of *established* refugees felt they were discriminated against when looking for work. The research associates felt women from some cultures were discriminated against when looking for work, often because of the way they dressed (see Chapter 12).

16.4 SITUATIONS WHERE DISCRIMINATION OCCURRED

Participants who said they had experienced discrimination were asked to describe how they were discriminated against and the situations in which this occurred. Of the 14 individuals who said they had experienced discrimination at six months, four people said this occurred while trying to find a job. These individuals felt that employers preferred ‘Kiwis’ to refugees. A number of migrants also said they had experienced discrimination when applying for jobs (Dunstan, Boyd and Crichton, 2004). Three individuals referred to their treatment at The Ministry of Social Development’s Work and Income (W&I) and four said their children or themselves had experienced discrimination at school or in other study.

“We have had one situation, I believe. Our case manager in WINZ [W&I] believes we refugees are the intruders who get the New Zealanders’ benefits.”

Iraqi Quota refugee, six months

“Mainly at school, other students say things about my colour and say New Zealand is not your country.”

Somali Quota refugee, six months

Two Somali refugees referred to a recent issue in the media involving Somali refugees. These individuals said they were viewed and treated negatively by others because of this incident.

At two years, individuals referred to a range of instances, often relating to negative treatment from the general public. One person said they were

“I always feel that we are second-class citizens here job-wise; employers prefer Kiwis to us”

Iraqi Family Reunion refugee, six months

“I feel that the Kiwis don’t like to mix with us when they know that we are from Iraq.”

Iraqi Family Reunion refugee, two years

discriminated against when applying for a job and one person experienced discrimination at their workplace.

“Since September 11 2001, people's attitudes have changed and as a Muslim I have encountered some unpleasant expressions and attitudes. My workplace would not allow me to wear my head-scarf.”

Somali Convention refugee, two years

Fourteen *established* refugees said they had experienced discrimination in the last month. They often referred to acts of abuse from the general public (7 responses). Two others said they had been abused by their neighbours and two said they experienced discrimination at a sporting event. These people were often told they were not wanted in New Zealand and to ‘go home’.

“I actually got into much trouble with some boys in our neighbourhood. They called me names saying ‘...go back to your country - this is not your country!’ Thus, there was a fight and I lost one of my fingers.”

Iraqi Quota refugee, five years

Three others referred to discrimination they (or their children) had experienced at school. Three said they were discriminated against in their workplace.

“Some students at my school blamed Somalis for taking money from school to help them and for this reason we can't have sports, they said. In other words, Somalis are poor and they demand too much of the school. They are a burden on school.”

Somali Quota refugee, five years

16.5 WHETHER PARTICIPANTS SOUGHT HELP TO DEAL WITH DISCRIMINATION

Some participants sought help to deal with discrimination. Of the *recently arrived* refugees interviewed at six months, four out of 14 people who had experienced discrimination sought help for it. At two years, nearly all of the people who had experienced discrimination sought help. Of the *established* refugees, eight out of 14 individuals who had experienced discrimination sought help.

Participants sought help from a range of people. *Recently arrived* refugees mainly turned to friends or the police for this help. One participant went to a community law centre, another contacted the Race Relations Conciliator and another talked to someone at Refugees as Survivors (RAS). *Established* refugees contacted the police, Housing New Zealand Corporation (HNZC) or talked to someone at school. One person said they went to the Refugee and Migrant Service (RMS) and another contacted a community group.

16.6 FINDINGS FROM FOCUS GROUPS

Discrimination towards refugees in New Zealand was discussed in several focus groups. A group of service providers felt refugees often experienced discrimination from landlords who took advantage of refugees who could not

“Our neighbours in the previous house used to throw eggs and dirty nappies on our car and in our back yard because we are Iraqis.”

Iraqi Quota refugee, five years

Speak English, or saw refugees as undesirable tenants. They gave the example that if a refugee went to look at a private rental house with a 'Kiwi' they were more likely to get the place than if they went alone. This has been documented by others (for example, Guerin et al., 2004). A group of Burmese refugees living in Nelson said that they had experienced discrimination from landlords and HNZC, although they did not go into the details of this. The research associates said that refugees also experienced discrimination when looking for work. For example, employers would not return their calls or tell them a job had gone when it had only recently been advertised.

A group of service providers commented refugees often experienced discrimination from landlords.

Service provider, focus group

As discussed in Chapter 14, Afghan and Somali teenagers in focus groups talked about discrimination they had experienced at school. This included instances such as name calling and being told they were not welcome in a computer class. A group of Burmese teenagers living in Nelson said they had not experienced discrimination in the school environment.

16.7 SUMMARY

Overall, a relatively small number of participants said they had experienced discrimination in New Zealand when directly questioned. However, issues of discrimination arose in participants' responses to other questions, such as those relating to housing, finding work and children and teenagers' experiences at school. Discrimination was also discussed in focus groups. When discrimination is occurring, even if it is only perceived, it can be detrimental to a refugee's well-being.

More *established* refugees than other participants discussed experiencing discrimination. It may be that more of this group had had such experiences, or that after five years discrimination was more obvious and upsetting to them or they felt more comfortable to discuss such issues. Racial and ethnic discrimination towards refugees is a complex area that further research (such as that being carried out by the Migration Research Group at Waikato University) will help us to further understand and address.

17 LEARNING ABOUT NEW ZEALAND CULTURE AND MAINTENANCE OF OWN CULTURE

17.1 INTRODUCTION

This section focuses on refugees' understanding of New Zealand culture and issues around the maintenance of their own culture. Participants were asked about their knowledge of the Treaty of Waitangi and Maori and how important it was for them to learn about the New Zealand way of life. Participants were asked about the importance of maintaining their own culture, difficulties they had experienced with this and whether they had shared their culture with people outside of their ethnic group. The topics covered in this chapter include:

- understanding of Maori and the Treaty of Waitangi;
- understanding of New Zealand culture and way of life;
- importance of learning about New Zealand culture;
- maintaining their own culture;
- difficulties maintaining culture; and
- sharing culture with people outside of their ethnic group.

Key themes

- ➔ Forty-nine percent of *recently arrived* refugees interviewed at two years and 46 percent of *established* refugees said they had some knowledge of the Treaty of Waitangi and the place of Maori in New Zealand society. Those over the age of 40 years were less likely to have knowledge of these issues than younger participants.
 - ➔ When asked to describe the New Zealand way of life, a number of *recently arrived* refugees interviewed at two years and *established* refugees referred to human rights and freedom and New Zealand being a safe and peaceful country.
 - ➔ Of the *recently arrived* refugees, 91 percent interviewed at six months and 85 percent at two years felt it was important to learn about the New Zealand way of life. Eighty percent of *established* refugees felt this way.
 - ➔ The main reason participants discussed for wanting to learn about the New Zealand culture was because they now lived here they felt it was important to know about the country they lived in.
 - ➔ The majority of participants felt it was important to maintain their own cultures while living in New Zealand and many did this by cooking their traditional foods, practising their religions and speaking their languages. Convention refugees placed slightly less importance on maintaining their culture than other participants.
 - ➔ Few *established* refugees had experienced difficulties maintaining their culture in New Zealand.
-

17.2 UNDERSTANDING OF MAORI AND THE TREATY OF WAITANGI

One challenge for refugees resettling in New Zealand is gaining knowledge about New Zealand and its values. By learning more about the place in which they are living refugees will be able to put certain events in the country into a broader context. It is important for refugees to be informed about the Treaty of

Waitangi and what it means for people in this country. Quota refugees get basic information about New Zealand when they first arrive at the Mangere Refugee Reception Centre (Mangere), and receive a booklet outlining the main points of the Treaty of Waitangi.

Service providers discussed in a focus group that many refugees had little or no knowledge of the Treaty of Waitangi and Maori in New Zealand. They felt many refugees would like to learn about these issues now they were living in New Zealand, but had few opportunities to do so. The research associates suggested that although students are taught about the Treaty of Waitangi at school, students did not always remember what they were taught or did not understand it.

A point to keep in mind when interpreting the data in this section is another issue raised by the research associates. Participants were asked questions about the ‘New Zealand way of life’ and the research associates felt this was often difficult to translate and needed further definition. They also said that participants often found questions relating to the Treaty of Waitangi difficult to answer.

17.2.1 Recently arrived refugees at six months

Recently arrived refugees interviewed at six months were asked what they knew about the Treaty of Waitangi and the place of Maori in New Zealand society. Many participants lacked an understanding of these issues with over half responding they did not know or they knew nothing about these issues (120 responses).⁶² A further nine participants said they did not know much.

Some participants felt they had some understanding of the Treaty of Waitangi and Maori in New Zealand. Their responses were:

- Maori have special rights (19 responses);
- Maori are the indigenous people of New Zealand (18 responses);
- the Treaty is an agreement between Maori and the English (16 responses); and
- the Treaty is about Maori and English working together (10 responses).

17.2.2 Recently arrived refugees at two years

Recently arrived refugees interviewed at two years were asked similar questions about the Treaty of Waitangi and the place of Maori in society. As shown in Table 17.1, half of this group had some knowledge of these issues. There were differences between refugee groups with 71 percent of Convention refugees having some knowledge compared to 49 percent of Quota refugees and 37 percent of Family Reunion refugees. Convention refugees had been in New Zealand for longer than other participants while waiting for their refugee status to be determined. This group also rated their English language ability higher than other participants, so may have found it easier to access such information. That more Quota refugees knew about the Treaty of Waitangi and Maori than Family

⁶² One hundred and ninety-three people responded as participants in the pilot survey were not asked this question.

“Almost nothing. I haven’t been told anything regarding the Treaty. But I know Maori live in New Zealand.”

Iraqi Family Reunion refugee, six months

Reunion refugees may be because Quota refugees receive information on these topics at Mangere.

Those who said they had some knowledge of the Treaty of Waitangi and Maori were asked to describe what they knew. As would be expected, the participants had a broader understanding of these issues at two years than they did at six months. Some of the most common responses included:

- the Treaty of Waitangi is an agreement between Maori and Pakeha (50 responses);
- Maori have certain rights, including to the land and certain resources (33 responses);
- the Treaty is about equal rights or the welfare of New Zealanders (15 responses); and
- Maori are indigenous to New Zealand (12 responses).

A few people referred to other knowledge about Maori or the Treaty of Waitangi, such as that the Treaty was signed in 1840, Maori is an official language in New Zealand and the Treaty is the founding document of New Zealand.

When asked how they learnt about the Treaty of Waitangi and Maori, 21 participants interviewed at two years said they were taught these topics at an English language class and a further 21 learnt about these areas at school, polytechnic or university. Thirteen people said they learnt from friends or family and six individuals cited classes at Mangere.

Table 17.1 Whether *recently arrived* refugees at two years had knowledge of the Treaty of Waitangi and Maori

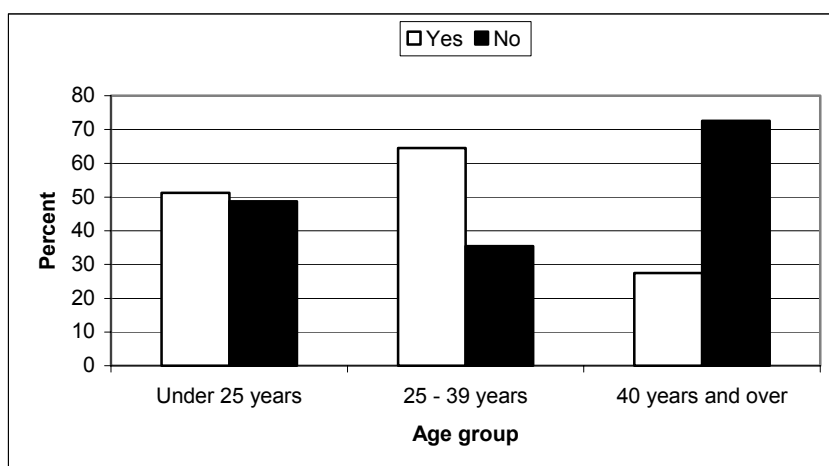
Knowledge of Treaty of Waitangi and Maori	Refugee type							
	Quota		Convention		Family Reunion		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Yes	36	49	20	71	19	37	75	49
No	38	51	8	29	33	63	79	51
Total	74	100	28	100	52	100	154	100

Note

1. Six did not know and two did not respond.

There were differences in the proportion of participants at two years who had knowledge of the Treaty of Waitangi and Maori by age group (see Figure 17.1). Participants between the ages of 25 and 39 years were the most likely to have knowledge of these issues (65 percent), compared to 51 percent of under 25 year olds and only 27 percent of those over 40 years.

Figure 17.1 Whether recently arrived refugees at two years had knowledge of the Treaty of Waitangi and Maori by age group n=154



Note

1. Six did not know and two did not respond.

17.2.3 Established refugees

Established refugees were asked if they knew anything about the Treaty of Waitangi and Maori in New Zealand. Just under half of the 178 participants (46 percent) said they had knowledge of these issues.⁶³

Of those who said they had knowledge of the Treaty, most knew it was an agreement between Maori and the Crown (61 responses). Several participants said that Maori were the indigenous people of New Zealand (24 responses), with some specifically referring to Maori being Tangata Whenua or people of the land. Seventeen people said the Treaty was about Maori having special rights, while 14 said it was about Maori having the same rights as Pakeha. Eleven participants said the Treaty was about land issues and eight participants said the Treaty was about creating peace.

“The country of New Zealand was established based on the Treaty of Waitangi signed between Maori Iwis and British government in which they were committed to work together to make this country and put an end to civil wars. It is still important today because Maori people think the white people cheated them, and they are still trying to resolve it, especially in the land claim.”

Iranian Quota refugee, five years

Most *established* refugees said they got this knowledge from school, university or polytechnic (33 responses) or from Mangere (32 responses). Sixteen said they learnt about these areas in the media and 13 through reading books. Ten individuals said they were taught these topics in an English language class.

Figure 17.2 shows the proportion of *established* refugees who had knowledge of the Treaty of Waitangi and Maori by age group. The proportion who had knowledge of these issues decreased with age. Sixty percent of those under 25

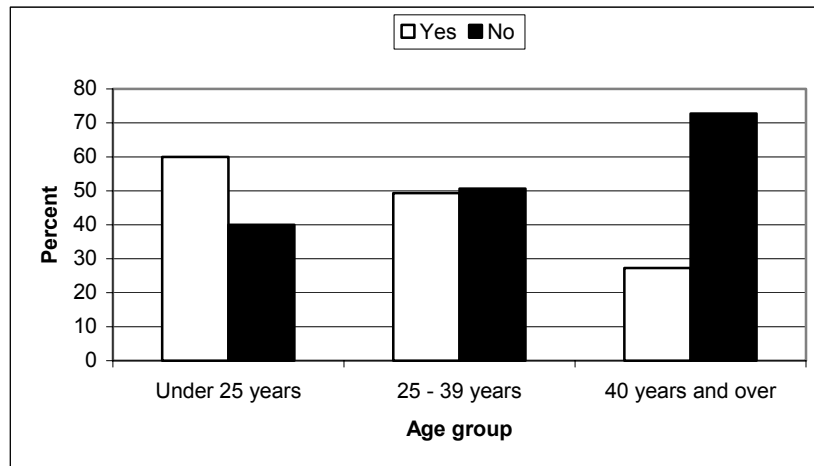
⁶³ Eleven people responded that they did not know.

“The Treaty of Waitangi is the treaty between the British Crown and the Maori chiefs. The Treaty guarantees the Maori people possession of their culture and land.”

Ethiopian Quota refugee, five years

years had knowledge of these issues, compared to 49 percent of 25 to 39 year olds and 27 percent of those aged 40 years and over. This finding may reflect younger participants being taught about these areas at school. Older participants tended to have poorer English language abilities which would make it more difficult to access information on these topics (see Table A.4.12 in Appendix 4).

Figure 17.2 Whether established refugees had knowledge of the Treaty of Waitangi and Maori by age group *n*=178



Note

1. Eleven did not know.

17.3 UNDERSTANDING OF NEW ZEALAND CULTURE AND WAY OF LIFE

Participants were asked about the New Zealand way of life and this is discussed below. Teenagers also discussed their impressions of the New Zealand way of life (see Chapter 14). Teenagers appreciated the freedom and opportunities they had in New Zealand, however some disliked other teenagers showing a lack of respect for parents and teachers.

17.3.1 Recently arrived refugees

Recently arrived refugees interviewed at six months were asked what they knew about New Zealand culture. Many individuals said they did not know (87 responses) or said they knew little or nothing (29 responses). Other participants commented on New Zealand people being friendly, accepting and helpful (25 responses). Sixteen participants said New Zealand was a multicultural society, while 13 people said New Zealand was a liberal and free society. A few people commented that people in New Zealand spoke English (12 responses) and the main religion was Christianity (12 responses). Five individuals said there was no discrimination or racism in New Zealand.

At two years, participants were asked how they would describe the New Zealand way of life. Having come from often dangerous situations in their former countries, many individuals said New Zealand was a country where individual rights and freedom were respected (48 responses) and New Zealand was a peaceful and safe country (32 responses). A number commented on the good qualities of New Zealanders, who were kind, friendly, polite and generous (38 responses). Participants had a range of other comments about the New Zealand way of life including:

“People are very friendly. They greet each other on the streets even if they do not know each other, no discrimination”

Burmese Quota refugee, six months

“One good point of New Zealand way of life is that nobody asks us why we dress differently or speak differently, and it's different than our way of life, e.g. my son is 20 years old but he is living with us and he will live in the future as well even if he is married.”

Afghan Family Reunion refugee, two years

- people are hard working (39 responses);
- lifestyle is happy, fun loving and easy going (34 responses);
- people enjoy holidays and weekends (25 responses);
- good family life (18 responses);
- people's cultures and beliefs are respected (23 responses); and
- people have a good lifestyle (17 responses).

“Hard to get job, people are hard working, people like travelling and relaxing, majority have no religious beliefs but respect other belief.”

Ethiopian Quota refugee, two years

Some individuals commented that New Zealand families were small, rather than including extended family (15 responses), and others mentioned that the New Zealand culture was different from their own culture (11 responses). Some individuals discussed aspects of the New Zealand culture they did not like. This included New Zealanders not caring about education, watching too much television, eating a lot of fast food, not saving money and drinking a lot (11 responses). A few individuals said the climate was cold and it was difficult to get a job.

“They are hard working and enjoy their free time, spending lots of money. People have no saving habits.”

Sri Lankan Convention refugee, two years

“They are very independent and they love sport. After 18, children leave from their parent's home. I think it is good. Get independent and freedom.”

Burmese Quota refugee, two years

“Mostly; they have good families, are not hard working, enjoy their life and society, and are loving people.”

Iranian Family Reunion refugee, two years

17.3.2 Established refugees

“Life in New Zealand is natural, peaceful and people have freedom. Hardly has any harm done to you.”

Vietnamese Quota refugee, five years

Established refugees were asked how they would describe the New Zealand way of life. The most common responses related to New Zealand being a free and democratic society with respect for human rights (41 responses), New Zealanders having a ‘good life’ (42 responses) and New Zealand being safe and peaceful (27 responses).

“Generally the New Zealand way of life is good, especially food and clothing and people are very friendly. Also, it's a peaceful life; there's no civil war like in my own country. I would say life over here is good.”

Ethiopian Quota refugee, five years

It was also frequently mentioned that New Zealanders like leisure and outdoor activities (39 responses). Leisure activities included going away with family, going to the beach and swimming. Others said New Zealanders worked hard (29 responses) and were generally employed and/or educated people (20 responses).

“New Zealanders are very serious in doing their jobs as they feel it's not always easy to get a job.”

Iraqi Quota refugee, five years

A number of *established* refugees said there was freedom and independence in New Zealand (29 responses). Some participants viewed freedom positively, while others viewed it negatively, especially in relation to children (for example, leaving home before they are married).

“Teenagers have more freedom and it is not good for their future. They often end up in undesirable behaviour.”

Sri Lankan refugee, five years

Twenty-seven participants said that part of the New Zealand way of life is caring for families and 11 said New Zealand was a good place for families. On the other hand, 18 participants said that families were not particularly close-knit in New Zealand. Some examples given were many people getting divorced, parents spending little time with their children and sending older relatives to rest homes. A number of these people noted that teenagers leave home as soon as they can.

“People do not talk to one another unless they are related. Family life is dysfunctional mostly.”

Ethiopian Quota refugee, five years

Other descriptions *established* refugees gave about the New Zealand way of life included the good education that is available (18 responses), a different culture to what they were used to (15 responses), good government support systems are available (12 responses) and it is multicultural and diverse (9 responses). Other points were similar to those discussed by *recently arrived* refugees, including not liking the behaviours of some New Zealanders (such as drinking), New Zealanders liking sport, a lack of racism and discrimination.

17.4 IMPORTANCE OF LEARNING ABOUT NEW ZEALAND CULTURE

17.4.1 Recently arrived refugees

The majority of *recently arrived* refugees believed it was important to learn about New Zealand culture. At six months, 91 percent of participants felt it was important or very important to learn about New Zealand culture, as did 85 percent at two years (see Table 17.2). A small proportion of participants at each interview felt it was not important (3 percent at six months and 6 percent at two years). More Family Reunion refugees than other participants responded this way.

“Good life style, good jobs. Perfect education system. Working people, freedom, enjoying their life, outdoor, travel, fishing, food, helpful.”

Iraqi Quota refugee, five years

Ninety-one percent of participants interviewed at six months and 85 percent at two years felt it was important to learn about New Zealand culture.

Table 17.2 Importance of learning about New Zealand culture for recently arrived refugees

Importance of learning about NZ culture	Refugee type							
	Quota		Convention		Family Reunion		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
6 months								
Very important	33	40	17	47	31	45	81	43
Important	45	54	15	42	31	45	91	48
Neither important nor unimportant	3	4	4	11	4	6	11	6
Not important	2	2	0	0	3	4	5	3
Not at all important	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	83	100	36	100	69	100	188	100
2 years								
Very important	34	47	19	59	17	33	70	45
Important	33	45	11	34	19	37	63	40
Neither important nor unimportant	5	7	0	0	9	18	14	9
Not important	1	1	1	3	4	8	6	4
Not at all important	0	0	1	3	2	4	3	2
Total	73	100	32	100	51	100	156	100

Note

1. This question was not asked of the 16 people who took part in the pilot survey.
2. At six months, two did not know and three did not respond. At two years, five did not know and one did not respond.

“Because now this will be my country and I will spend my coming life here. I must learn and know more about New Zealand.”

Iraqi Family Reunion refugee, six months

Participants were asked why they felt it was important or not important to learn about New Zealand culture. One hundred and seventy-two participants interviewed at six months felt it was important to learn about New Zealand culture. Most felt this way because New Zealand was the place where they were living and/or where they would continue to live.

“We are going to stay here; we'd better get to know about the culture, to avoid problems.”

Sri Lankan Convention refugee, six months

Other reasons given by these participants included so they could talk about New Zealand when travelling (17 responses), so as not to offend other cultures (8 responses), to make contact with other people (7 responses) and to help them settle (6 responses). Many of the participants who felt it was neither important nor unimportant to learn about New Zealand culture did not know why they felt this way, although a few said it was because of their age.

The 133 participants at two years who felt it was important to learn about New Zealand culture gave similar reasons to those at six months. One hundred and thirteen participants said it was important because they were living in New Zealand and it was important to know about the country you live in. Thirty-one participants said they were going to spend the rest of their lives here, six said they were New Zealanders and three said they were going to become New Zealand citizens.

“Because it is a different country from our home country and we should know about the way of life where we do live.”

Afghan Convention refugee, two years

“I am living in New Zealand. I have to know what to expect and what people could expect from me, hence I need to know how they live, what do they need etc to be able to socialise myself or to integrate. Above all, as a young boy, my son is going to adopt the New Zealand way of life, so to maintain good communication with my son.”

Ethiopian Quota refugee, two years

“I now live in New Zealand, and this is my home. I want to get on with other people to be able to better communicate with them.”

Somali Quota refugee, two years

Other participants said it was important to learn about New Zealand culture in order to know and understand how to interact with people in New Zealand (24 responses). A few participants felt knowing about the New Zealand culture would help them better raise their families here (11 responses) and assist their children to cope with life (9 responses). Others said that knowing about New Zealand culture would help them integrate with other New Zealanders (9 responses) and assist them making friends (8 responses). Three people said it was important to understand New Zealand culture to get a job.

“If we know the New Zealand way of life, it is easy to be friendly with them.”

Sri Lankan Convention refugee, two years

The nine participants at two years who said it was not important to learn about New Zealand culture gave a range of responses for this. Four said they were not interested in knowing about others and two said they did not have contact outside of their ethnic group. Two people said they did not think it would make a difference to understand New Zealand culture and one person said they were happy with their life the way it was. Two participants said it was not important because they were old.

17.4.2 Established refugees

Eighty percent of *established* refugees felt it was important or very important to learn about New Zealand culture (see Table 17.3). Twelve percent said it was neither important nor unimportant and 7 percent said it was not important.

Table 17.3 Importance of learning about New Zealand culture for established refugees

Importance of learning about NZ culture	Total	Total
	n	%
Very important	54	29
Important	96	51
Neither important nor unimportant	23	12
Not important	10	5
Not at all important	4	2
Total	187	100

Note

1. Two did not know.

“Because I live here now, I should be able to mix, share and understand their culture. It is important for my living here.”

Somali Quota refugee, five years

“I have my own culture and way of living. But this doesn't mean that I don't like the New Zealand way of life. I believe I will keep my own way of life, plus other aspects of the New Zealand way of life that can definitely fit with mine.”

Iraqi Quota refugee, five years

The vast majority of recently arrived refugees felt it was important to maintain their own culture in New Zealand.

Similar to *recently arrived* refugees, nearly half of the *established* who felt it was important to learn about New Zealand culture said this was because New Zealand was the place where they now lived. A few said they wanted to live like New Zealanders.

“We have to live with others peacefully in New Zealand, so we have to understand others. It is necessary to understand the way of life, to understand the people.”

Sri Lankan Quota refugee, five years

Some people said it was important to know about their own culture as well as the New Zealand culture (20 responses) and some discussed the importance of maintaining a balance between the two cultures. Some participants specifically mentioned it was important to maintain their own culture (21 responses).

Other reasons *established* refugees discussed for wanting to learn about New Zealand culture included to live in harmony with other people (19 responses), to fit in and integrate (15 responses) and to talk to New Zealanders (15 responses). Thirteen people said learning about New Zealand culture would help their children to understand about New Zealand.

17.5 MAINTAINING THEIR OWN CULTURE

This section looks at the importance to refugees of maintaining their own culture while in New Zealand. Given that some refugees will not have had an opportunity to see their home country and will have left unwillingly, they may not have many of the cultural items migrants might usually bring to New Zealand. Also, having left in a hurry to escape danger, many will not have had time to make the mental adjustment to leaving.

17.5.1 Importance of maintaining culture

Participants were asked how important it was for them to maintain their culture while living in New Zealand. As is shown in Table 17.4, almost all *recently arrived* refugees felt it was very important or important to maintain their own culture.

At six months, a slightly smaller proportion of Convention refugees said it was important to maintain their culture, compared with Quota and Family Reunion refugees. At two years, all Quota and Family Reunion refugees felt it was important to maintain their culture compared to 80 percent of Convention refugees.

In some cases, Convention refugees may have more negative feelings about their former countries than Quota or Family Reunion refugees due to the circumstances that caused them to flee. Also, Convention refugees often came to New Zealand alone, whereas Quota and Family Reunion refugees generally came with family members or already had family here. Having family members around may strengthen the desire to maintain culture. Convention refugees may feel more urgently that they need to learn the New Zealand culture and integrate with New Zealanders outside of their community. A higher proportion of

Convention refugees than other participants had New Zealand citizenship (see Chapter 18).

Table 17.4 Importance of maintaining culture for *recently arrived* refugees

Importance of maintaining culture	Refugee type							
	Quota		Convention		Family Reunion		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
6 months								
Very important	75	79	16	40	43	61	134	65
Important	17	18	18	45	25	35	60	29
Neither important nor unimportant	2	2	2	5	2	3	6	3
Not important	1	1	4	10	1	1	6	3
Not at all important	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	95	100	40	100	71	100	206	100
2 years								
Very important	51	67	7	23	32	62	90	57
Important	25	33	17	55	20	38	62	39
Neither important nor unimportant	0	0	6	19	0	0	6	4
Not important	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Not at all important	0	0	1	3	0	0	1	1
Total	76	100	31	100	52	100	159	57

Note

1. At six months, two did not know and one did not respond. At two years, two did not know and one did not respond.

Table 17.5 shows the proportion of *established* refugees who felt it was important to maintain their culture while living in New Zealand. Again, nearly all participants felt it was important to maintain their culture.

Table 17.5 Importance of maintaining culture for *established* refugees

Importance of maintaining culture	Total	Total
	n	%
Very important	112	59
Important	74	39
Neither important nor unimportant	2	1
Not important	1	1
Total	189	100

Recently arrived refugees interviewed at six months were asked why they felt it was important (or otherwise) to maintain their culture in New Zealand. Participants gave a number of reasons why maintaining their culture was important, including:

- to maintain cultural identity (44 responses);
- so their children and future generations could learn about their culture (41 responses);
- their personal cultural identity said who they were and where they came from (29 responses);

“I am very proud to be a Somali, so that I can share my culture with other New Zealanders and maintain my identity.”

Somali
Convention
refugee, six
months

- it was a valued culture which they were proud of (28 responses);
- they were proud of themselves (17 responses);
- to maintain history and origins (13 responses); and
- to share their culture with other people (13 responses).

“The main reason is I want my children to know where they come from, where we are from. I want them to maintain the ‘identity’ of Burmese.”

Burmese Quota refugee, six months

Twelve individuals interviewed at six months said it was not important or neither important nor unimportant to maintain their culture in New Zealand. Their reasons included that they were no longer living in the former country and it was important to get used to the new culture in New Zealand.

17.5.2 How participants maintained their culture

The concept of integration in New Zealand means that refugees should be able to maintain their own culture while living here. Schools, in particular, try to provide appropriate schooling to children of different cultures while other organisations are also trying to meet the needs of different cultural groups.⁶⁴ However, it may be difficult to maintain cultural identity in New Zealand given that communities can be small and they may not be able to access a range of ‘cultural’ products such as literature, food and clothing.

“Maintaining language, religion, traditional foods, and teaching our children.”

Afghan Family Reunion refugee, six months

Participants were asked to discuss how they maintained their cultures in New Zealand. The most common responses from *recently arrived* refugees interviewed at six months were eating traditional food (134 responses), practising religion (121 responses) and speaking their language (116 responses). Other factors that assisted cultural maintenance were:

- having events and socialising with people from their communities (40 responses);
- teaching their children and grandchildren about their culture (36 responses);
- attending cultural activities and important festivals (29 responses);
- wearing traditional clothes (28 responses); and
- reading and writing (18 responses).

“We can practice our religion here. My backyard is quite spacious. I can plant vegetables and we cook the traditional way. We dance our traditional dance at our New Year and festivals.”

Burmese Quota refugee, two years

“We go to the Mosque. We teach our children how to do things the Kurdish way.”

Iraqi Quota refugee, six months

Recently arrived refugees interviewed at two years cited similar methods for maintaining their cultures, with the most common ways including speaking their

⁶⁴ Examples include the Auckland District Health Board providing community workers for different cultural groups, the RMS providing cross cultural workers and ethnic communities themselves developing services for their own needs.

own language (120 responses), cooking traditional food (113 responses), and practising religion (107 responses). Other ways included:

- festivals and cultural events (34 responses);
- meeting with members of their ethnic group (30 responses);
- teaching children about their culture (26 responses);
- wearing traditional clothes (26 responses);
- spending time with families (14 responses); and
- reading/listening to media, including the internet (11 responses).

“Speaking the language. Practicing my religion. Attending community meetings. Participating in national events i.e. Independence Day.”

Somali Quota refugee, two years

Established refugees did much the same as other groups to maintain their cultures in New Zealand. Once again, the three things that emerged were speaking their own language (142 responses), eating traditional food (133 responses) and practising their religion (106 responses).

Another important way *established* refugees kept their cultures strong, was through interacting with their communities. This was done informally through mixing with friends and family (51 responses) and in more formal events including community gatherings and celebrations (89 responses).

“Yes, meeting them at church, shopping, community meetings.”

Iraqi Quota refugee, five years

“Every Friday, or at praying times, we meet our ethnic group at Mosque or community meetings.”

Somali Quota refugee, five years

A number of participants said they maintained their culture by involving their children in, and teaching them about, their culture (42 responses). Children were often seen as important for passing cultural identity on to future generations. Others discussed the importance of music and art (24 responses), keeping customs and traditions (23 responses) and wearing traditional costumes (20 responses).

“Telling the children about Ethiopian culture, history and food, speaking my language. By celebrating the Ethiopian holidays and anniversaries with other Ethiopian friends.”

Ethiopian Quota refugee, five years

17.5.3 Contact with members of ethnic group

As discussed above, a number of participants said they maintained their cultures by interacting with their community. Participants were asked to describe how often they met with members of their ethnic group and in what situations. At six months, many said they met regularly with members of their ethnic group,

“Language, religion, food. I am trying to teach my children Assyrian through church so they will be able to write and read.”

Iraqi Family Reunion refugee, two years

“At cultural programmes, social gatherings and at temple each week.”

Sri Lankan Quota refugee, five years

including 57 who said they met daily and 47 who met weekly. Thirteen participants said they did not meet with their ethnic group (9 of these individuals were Convention refugees).

Religious observance was central to ethnic communities getting together, with many people saying they met with members of their ethnic group for religious occasions. Other activities participants did with their community members at six months included visiting and socialising with friends and family and attending special community occasions. A number of participants said they saw members of their community at school.

At two years, many participants still had regular contact with members of their ethnic group with 97 participants indicating they met regularly (between daily and weekly). Twenty-eight participants said they met with their ethnic group occasionally and 30 said they met for special occasions. Again, religious observance was important for ethnic communities coming together, with many participants saying they met with community members at places of worship. Other participants said they saw members of their ethnic group during visits to friends and family or at school.

Eighty-four *established* refugees said they regularly met with members of their ethnic group. These meetings occurred through religious observance, at cultural meetings and celebrations, through informal visits to family and friends and at school.

17.5.4 Findings from focus groups

The maintenance of culture was discussed in several focus groups. Iranian women and Somali women who took part in focus groups and had different views.

The Somali women felt that it was very important to maintain their culture in New Zealand. They did this by speaking Somali at home, eating Somali food, dressing traditionally, having traditional celebrations (such as weddings), and showing their children videos from Somalia. The women felt that some of the Somali children and teenagers were interested in maintaining their culture while others were not, and they felt it was difficult for teenagers to maintain their culture in New Zealand.

The Iranian women felt that they could carry on their culture within the family, but not outside of the family. Some of the Iranian women said that it was important to integrate with the New Zealand culture. In terms of their children maintaining their culture and religion, the Iranian women felt that they could teach their children the Iranian culture but it was up to the children whether they carried this on or not. They felt that many of their children identified more with New Zealand culture than Iranian culture.

“You already have a culture and it’s beautiful to keep that culture, but you can’t deny that you are in a different environment and that is going to affect you.”

Iranian woman, focus group

“No, my children believe they are New Zealanders, because they know this language and culture. They went to Catholic school, so they know more about Christianity than Islam. They even cried a few days ago when we lost the Americas Cup.”

Iranian women, focus group

As discussed in Chapter 14, Burmese, Afghan and Somali teenagers who took part in focus groups felt it was important to maintain their culture in New Zealand. The Burmese teenagers said it was especially important to maintain their language and respect for elders, while the Somali teenagers discussed the importance of religion. Some teenagers said they would like to learn more about the New Zealand culture.

17.6 DIFFICULTIES MAINTAINING CULTURE

Only a small proportion of *recently arrived* refugees (5 percent at six months and 2 percent at two years) said they had experienced difficulties maintaining their culture in New Zealand. At six months, no Family Reunion refugees said they had experienced difficulties compared to 9 percent of Quota refugees and 8 percent of Convention refugees. At two years, there was not much difference by refugee type.

The difficulties referred to by 11 individuals interviewed at six months were maintaining their language (4 responses), certain items (such as traditional costumes) being difficult to find or expensive (5 responses), not enough members of their community in New Zealand (2 responses) and a lack of community activities (2 responses). One participant said they found it difficult because other New Zealanders did not know about their culture.

“Only since September 11, few people would not make you feel welcomed.”

Somali Quota refugee, two years

Three individuals discussed difficulties at two years including two who said it was difficult to maintain their language and one who said New Zealanders were less welcoming since 11 September 2001.

Of the 188 *established* refugees, 17 (9 percent) said they had experienced difficulties maintaining their culture in New Zealand.⁶⁵ A number of these individuals referred to a lack of resources, such as a lack of funds and venues for teaching community members their language and culture (9 responses). Others referred to a lack of ingredients for traditional food (3 responses). Four individuals said they experienced difficulties because their communities were small or were not strong and four said there was no traditional or cultural education available to members of their community. Three participants said it was difficult to maintain their culture because their children were influenced by Western culture in New Zealand.

17.6.1 Findings from focus groups

Service providers who took part in focus groups said that it was often difficult for refugees to maintain their cultures in New Zealand. Some providers felt that New Zealanders in general ‘tolerated but did not encourage’ the maintenance of other cultures. Other providers noted that some schools (but not all) had

⁶⁵ One *established* refugee responded that they did not know.

provision for the maintenance of culture, such as prayer areas and allowing for female dress and their participation in sport. A group of Somali teenagers said their school lacked rooms suitable for prayer (see Chapter 14).

A group of Burmese refugees living in Nelson discussed some difficulties they had experienced maintaining their culture. They felt it was difficult to wear their traditional dress in everyday life and one family had received letters asking them to study the bible when they did not want to. Another difficulty discussed by this group was conflict between their own culture and the Maori culture. In the Burmese culture the head is the most sacred part of the body and children should not touch the head. Therefore the hongi (traditional Maori greeting) is not appropriate in Burmese culture. Also, in New Zealand people generally use first names rather than a title, whereas in Burmese culture a title shows respect.

17.7 SHARING CULTURE WITH PEOPLE OUTSIDE OF ETHNIC GROUP

17.7.1 What *recently arrived* refugees want others to know about their culture

Recently arrived refugees at six months were asked what they would like other New Zealanders to know about their culture. The most common areas participants discussed were:

- their food (69 responses);
- their religion and its values (66 responses);
- the history of their country and culture (60 responses);
- their music, art, dance and stories (44 responses);
- their language (41 responses); and
- their cultural dress (33 responses).

Some participants wanted others to know about certain aspects of their culture, such as their family life (18 responses), respect for elders (14 responses) and relationships between men and women (8 responses). A few people said they wanted New Zealanders to know about their suffering (5 responses), while others wanted people to know they were educated, and ‘good and honest people’ (18 responses). Twenty-eight participants said they did not know what they wanted others to know.

“Lots of people in New Zealand don't have the real picture on Assyrians. They think we are not educated. I would like them to know that we are people with ethics.”

Iraqi Family Reunion refugee, six months

17.7.2 Opportunities to share culture with other ethnic groups

Recently arrived refugees at two years and *established* refugees were asked about opportunities they may have had to share their culture with other ethnic groups in New Zealand. This question was asked to gain an understanding of how much refugees share their culture with other people in New Zealand.

“Yes. I cooked Iranian food for friends. We dance Iranian and watch Iranian video tapes (dance).”

Iranian Family Reunion refugee, two years

A number of *recently arrived* refugees said they had shared their culture with people outside their ethnic group. Often this was with friends and neighbours (35 responses), at school, university or polytechnic (32 responses), at cultural fairs and festivals (22 responses) and at work (20 responses). Sixteen individuals said they had shared their culture with their sponsors and ten with their English language class. These responses illustrate the use of networks such as work and education in helping participants to meet people outside of their ethnic group.

A number of participants said they had not shared their culture with other New Zealanders without explaining why (26 responses). Others gave a reason for not being able to share their culture, including language barriers (11 responses) and not having the opportunity to do so (10 responses).

One-hundred and thirty of the 189 *established* refugees had shared aspects of their culture with other groups. The most common situations for this were at school and polytechnic (42 responses), at cultural fairs and festivals (30 responses), at work (27 responses), at English language classes (26 responses) and with friends (24 responses).

“Sometimes in school I have shared my culture, for example, about food, New Years ceremony. And some friends of mine know some words of my language.”

Iraqi Quota refugee, five years

“Yes, we share information about my culture with other ethnic groups in New Zealand, especially at the children’s school or cultural fairs or with neighbours.”

Somali Quota refugee, five years

A few participants said they had shared their culture in public settings with the local community. Four people said they had shared their culture with their sponsors.

“Yes, although they seemed to be reluctant or I tried to give them an idea of the positive aspects of my culture by showing them some travel videos of my country. I used to even hire some halls once a week on my own budget to display these videos to show the true image of Iran to the people of Wellington.”

Iranian Quota refugee, five years

Forty-four *established* refugees said they had not shared their culture outside of their own ethnic group. The most common reason for this was difficulties with English language (11 responses). Other reasons mentioned by a few individuals included being busy at home or other people being too busy, or it not being culturally appropriate. Others did not give a reason for not sharing their culture. Seven people said they did not share their culture very often and six individuals did not know.

“I am still looking for an opportunity to share information about my culture especially about national food.”

Ethiopian Quota refugee, two years

“Unfortunately I couldn’t do that. First, it’s difficult to communicate, and secondly, in my culture a woman of my age stays at home most of the time.”

Iraqi Quota refugee, five years

17.8 SUMMARY

Half of *recently arrived* refugees interviewed at two years and a similar proportion of *established* refugees said they had some knowledge of the Treaty of Waitangi and Maori in New Zealand. Participants over the age of 40 years were less likely to have this knowledge than younger participants. Of the *recently arrived* refugees, more Convention refugees than other participants had this knowledge. The ability to access this information is likely to depend on one's English language ability and correspondingly Convention refugees rated their English better than other participants (see Chapter 10) while older refugees tended to have poorer English language skills (see Tables A.4.11 and A.4.12 in Appendix 4).

When asked about the New Zealand way of life, many participants focused on aspects that contrasted with their former countries such as people having freedom and individual rights and New Zealand being safe and peaceful. Some participants did not view freedom positively especially in relation to their children. Other comments related to an easy-going lifestyle and people enjoying leisure activities. Most participants felt it was important to learn about New Zealand culture.

Over 95 percent of *recently arrived* refugees at two years and *established* refugees felt it was important to maintain their own culture. Participants often did this through eating traditional food, practising their religion and speaking their language. Around one in ten *established* refugees said they had experienced difficulties maintaining their culture, with a number referring to a lack of resources (such as venues for teaching community members language and culture).

A number of Convention refugees said it was neither important nor unimportant or it was not important to maintain their culture. It may be that Convention refugees had more negative feelings about their former countries, because of their circumstances of flight. Convention refugees were also less likely to have family in New Zealand and a number said they were not in contact with their ethnic group. As discussed in Chapter 18, more Convention refugees had New Zealand citizenship than other participants.

18 SETTLING IN NEW ZEALAND

18.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines research participants' overall impressions of New Zealand and how settled they felt at each interview. Participants were asked about their experiences carrying out daily activities, what they hoped to achieve in New Zealand (including their intentions to apply for New Zealand citizenship) and what could be put in place to assist refugee resettlement. The topics covered in this chapter include:

- overall impressions of New Zealand;
- daily activities;
- how settled participants felt in New Zealand;
- what participants hoped to achieve in New Zealand;
- factors that could help refugee resettlement; and
- particular issues for men and women.

Key themes

- What participants liked most about New Zealand were kind and friendly people, feeling safe and secure and having freedom.
 - Participants said daily activities became easier over time as their knowledge of, and orientation to, New Zealand increased and their English language skills improved.
 - Eighty-five percent of *recently arrived* refugees at two years and 93 percent of *established* refugees said they felt comfortable carrying out daily activities. Participants often said things became easier over time. A key factor was access to transport and having a driver's license.
 - Of the *recently arrived* refugees, 77 percent interviewed at six months and 90 percent at two years said they felt somewhat or very settled in New Zealand. At six months, Convention refugees rated themselves as less settled than other participants, while after two years there was not much difference between refugee groups. Of the *established* refugees, 93 percent said they felt somewhat or very settled.
 - Many participants said having family in New Zealand was important in helping them to settle. Many participants also referred to the importance of government income support and learning English.
 - Some service providers felt there was a lack of support for refugee men in New Zealand. A group of Burmese men said they struggled with the equality that men and women experience in New Zealand.
 - Ninety percent of *recently arrived* refugees said they intended to apply for New Zealand citizenship. Eighty-three percent of *established* refugees said they already had New Zealand citizenship.
 - When asked what could be put in place to assist refugees to resettle, many participants said refugees needed more help to bring their families to New Zealand. Others suggested more help was needed in areas such as education, learning English, housing, orientation and finding work.
-

18.2 OVERALL IMPRESSIONS OF NEW ZEALAND

18.2.1 Safety from physical harm

Most participants said they felt physically safe in New Zealand.

Refugees often came from countries where their safety was compromised. All participants were asked how safe they felt from physical harm in New Zealand. The majority of *recently arrived* refugees interviewed at six months said they felt safe in New Zealand. This included participants who said they felt very safe or totally safe and four participants who said New Zealand was safer than their home countries. Nine participants said they felt safe, although they were concerned about crime in New Zealand such as theft.

“Ninety percent safe. There are house break-in incidents in my neighbourhood.”

The majority of participants at two years said they felt physically safe in New Zealand. Some individuals went into more detail, for example, 13 participants said they were free to go out when they wanted to and 17 said they felt very safe as New Zealand was a very peaceful and quiet country. Four people said that New Zealand was the safest place in the world. Again, some participants (13) said they felt safe, but had a specific concern (such as being afraid to go out at night or concern about crimes such as burglary).

Sri Lankan Convention refugee, two years

The majority of *established* refugees felt safe in New Zealand. Fifteen participants said they felt generally safe but had some concerns. These concerns related to what was reported in the media (3 responses), worry about crime (3 responses), worry about vehicle accidents (2 responses) and generally needing to be careful (3 responses).

“I feel safe. I am able to go out and do anything I want to do without fear.”

Somali Quota refugee, five years

18.2.2 Liked most about New Zealand

“I like the green environment, the generosity of New Zealand people and the kiwi bird which does not exist anywhere in the world.”

Somali Quota refugee, five years

Research participants were asked to describe what they liked most about living in New Zealand. *Recently arrived* and *established* refugees gave similar answers to this question and their responses often reflected what was lacking in their former countries. The main factors were kind and friendly people, living in peace and quiet, being safe and secure and, particularly for *established* refugees, having freedom and democracy. A number of participants (particularly *recently arrived* refugees) referred to physical aspects of New Zealand, such as the weather, the beauty of the country and the clean and green environment.

Many participants said they liked having access to government services, or that government services in New Zealand were good. A number of *established* refugees specifically mentioned access to healthcare. Some *recently arrived* refugees said New Zealand had good laws and political systems. A number of participants felt New Zealand was a good country for their children and *established* refugees often said they liked having the opportunity to take part in education and training and also liked leisure and outdoor activities.

“My children are happy at school, making good progress. My family in great security. Personal freedom. Very easy access to most daily activities. Very friendly people everywhere in New Zealand.”

Iraqi Family Reunion refugee, two years

Table 18.1 What participants liked most about New Zealand

Refugee type		
<i>Recently arrived</i>		<i>Established</i>
6 months (responses)	2 years (responses)	(responses)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Kind and friendly people (62) ▪ Peace and quiet (60) ▪ Having access to government services (52) ▪ Feeling safe and secure (43) ▪ Weather (36) ▪ Beauty of New Zealand (35) ▪ Clean and green environment (26) ▪ Having freedom (24) ▪ Legal and political systems (18) ▪ Having a future for themselves and children (16) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Kind and friendly people (63) ▪ Safety and security (50) ▪ Weather (36) ▪ Peacefulness (35) ▪ Freedom and democracy (30) ▪ Clean environment (28) ▪ Good government services (24) ▪ Good for children (17) ▪ Good systems and laws (12) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Freedom and democracy (61) ▪ Peace and quiet (52) ▪ Kind and friendly people (46) ▪ Safety and security (44) ▪ Opportunities for education and training (38) ▪ Good government services (38) ▪ Leisure and outdoor activities (29) ▪ Weather (25) ▪ Good for children (19) ▪ Having family and community here (19) ▪ Having access to health services (17)

Note

1. Participants could give multiple responses.

“I’m among very kind and gentle people who are ready to help others. I feel great security not only for me but also for my family. It’s good to be helped financially by WINZ [W&I] and I can get good healthcare too.”

Iraqi Quota refugee, five years

18.2.3 Disliked most about New Zealand

When research participants were asked what they disliked about New Zealand, a number said there was nothing they disliked or they did not know or did not wish to respond. More *established* than *recently arrived* refugees discussed aspects of New Zealand they did not like (see Table 18.2). One of the main factors discussed at each interview was difficulty finding work, including a lack of work in New Zealand and needing to have the appropriate qualifications.

A number of *recently arrived* refugees interviewed at two years and *established* refugees said they disliked being separated from family and had difficulty sponsoring family to New Zealand, and were not able to financially help family overseas. At each interview some participants said they disliked the behaviour of some New Zealanders, such as smoking and drinking, eating pork or non-Halal meat, gambling, and teenagers not respecting their parents.

Many participants said there was nothing they disliked about New Zealand. Others did not know or did not wish to respond.

Table 18.2 What participants disliked about New Zealand

Refugee type		
Recently arrived		Established (responses)
6 months (responses)	2 years (responses)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Weather (19) ▪ A lack of work or the need for appropriate qualifications (17) ▪ Behaviour of some New Zealanders (13) ▪ Cost of living (10) ▪ New Zealand television (7) ▪ Immigration policies (6) ▪ Education system (5) ▪ Crime (5) ▪ Not having close community members here (5) ▪ Nothing disliked (47) ▪ Don't know (37) ▪ No responses (26) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Difficulties finding employment (22) ▪ Being separated from and missing family and friends (20) ▪ Weather (10) ▪ Language difficulties (9) ▪ A lack of law and order, such as burglary and graffiti (9) ▪ Issues relating to alcohol and drugs (6) ▪ Being too far from their home country (6) ▪ Behaviour of some teenagers (5) ▪ Nothing disliked (50) ▪ Don't know/no response (17) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Being separated from family (28) ▪ Lack of work (25) ▪ Crime (19) ▪ Behaviour of some people in New Zealand (18) ▪ Weather (13) ▪ People have too many rights (10) ▪ Discrimination or racism (7) ▪ Nothing disliked (39) ▪ Don't know (17)

Note

1. Participants could give multiple responses.

18.2.4 Advice to others coming to New Zealand

Research participants were asked what advice they would give to others who were intending to come and live in New Zealand. A number of *recently arrived* refugees had advice relating to positive features of New Zealand, including that it is a good place (43 responses), that it is a quiet and peaceful country (34 responses) and that it is safe and secure (26 responses). Others said they would encourage people to come to New Zealand (22 responses), advise them that New Zealanders are kind and helpful (20 responses) and tell them the country is beautiful (19 responses).

A number of participants said they would advise others to learn English before coming (41 responses), or to find out about New Zealand before arriving (25 responses). Others said they would tell people it is difficult to find work (15 responses) or to arrange work before they arrived (3 responses). Thirteen people said they would advise others that they may struggle with a lack of money (13 responses) and they will need to adjust to change (6 responses).

“First, acquire a good English background. Study the reality about economic life in New Zealand. Study New Zealand culture. Study the basic aspects of life in New Zealand.”

Iraqi Family Reunion refugee, six months

At two years, the advice participants said they would give others was similar to at six months. As well as learning English, participants stressed it was important to prepare by gaining qualifications and learning about the New Zealand culture and people. Some said they would tell others to expect good things in New

“About how safe this country is; that there is freedom and the law is very good.”

Iranian Quota refugee, six months

“I always tell the truth, I told them New Zealand has very nice people and is a beautiful country. It's hard to get a job and government benefit, not much to travel anywhere and with children, money isn't enough.”

Iranian Quota refugee, two years

Zealand, including a good education (9 responses), a good government (9 responses), good government services (11 responses) and good opportunities for the future (7 responses). Others said they would give advice about what to do once in New Zealand, including respecting the laws (8 responses), making the most of educational opportunities (5 responses) and working hard (4 responses). Some said they would advise people to not leave any family members behind (10 responses) and to bring important cultural items (9 responses).

“Develop good English language skills. Get all the family members together to come to New Zealand. Bring some cultural things to New Zealand.”

Iraqi Quota refugee, two years

In what is becoming a familiar thread, the main thing *established* refugees would tell others coming to settle in New Zealand related to New Zealand being a good place to live (69 responses), being safe and peaceful (51 responses) and having a good environment and climate (24 responses). Others referred to New Zealanders being kind and helpful (27 responses) and the good opportunities for study in New Zealand (30 responses).

“Get a good qualification and learn more English. Try and study New Zealand way of life so as to know everything different culturally. And come all together. Don't leave any family member behind.”

Iraqi Quota refugee, five years

Thirty-five *established* refugees said they would advise others to learn English and 19 said they would tell others that they would require job skills and education. Twenty-three individuals said they would tell them to study all aspects of New Zealand life before coming here and eight said it was important to understand New Zealand culture. Some participants said they would advise others about difficulties they may experience in New Zealand with family reunification (23 responses), with finding work (14 responses) and with saving money (13 responses).

18.2.5 Findings from focus groups

Burmese and Kurdish men in focus groups discussed their thoughts on New Zealand. The Burmese men commented there was a lot more freedom and support in New Zealand compared to Burma/Thailand. They particularly noted the rights that women have in New Zealand and that this was quite different to what they were used to.

“In Burma the man leads the family, usually the woman follows. In this country it is governed by the women and also usually it's a bit of give and take. Sometimes the man follows the woman and sometimes the woman needs to follow the man.”

Burmese man, focus groups

Both the Burmese and Kurdish men talked about being better off in New Zealand. They mentioned money, food, opportunities for children (including attending school), opportunities for themselves, a better legal system, good housing, and their level of stress being reduced due to having these things.

“There's a very big difference here. You have food, income, peace of mind, it's much better. But difficult when they have got their families on their mind all the time.”

Kurdish man, focus group

The Burmese men felt there was a lack of discipline in New Zealand and they found this difficult. Before they arrived, they expected New Zealand to be “a strict country with good rules and regulations” but they had found this wasn’t the case. An example that was given was police officers observing but not taking actions to stop vandalism.

A group of Burmese refugees living in Nelson discussed what they liked about New Zealand. They said they liked having privacy and freedom of speech and peace. They felt New Zealand had a good benefit and health system (although one man felt that people relied on the benefit system because they did not want to work), good government management systems, good rules and regulations, good physical safety (although women did not always feel safe to go out at night) and they did not need to be afraid of the police. The men were uneasy with the equal rights between men and women in New Zealand, but felt this was something they could adapt to.

Iranian and Somali women discussed in focus groups their overall impressions of New Zealand. Both the Iranian and Somali women felt they had a better quality of life in New Zealand. The Iranian women enjoyed the freedom they had in New Zealand compared to Iran but were unhappy with some aspects of life in New Zealand, such as the services they had received. This could relate to what they were used to in Iran where they came from privileged backgrounds.

“But we had a nice house in Iran, we had air conditioning, gas in all houses. People were really rich and living good life. But here, even after ten years, we still believe we are refugees. We love New Zealand people, but most would still not feel happy.”

Iranian woman, focus group

The Somali women said they felt happy in New Zealand. They were particularly happy that their children were here and doing well. New Zealand had met their expectations in terms of being safe.

“Very happy to be here for safety side. We went to refugee camp where it was not safe. When came to New Zealand we felt safer.”

Somali woman, focus group

18.3 DAILY ACTIVITIES

Recently arrived refugees interviewed at two years and *established* refugees were asked about their experiences carrying out daily activities in New Zealand, such as shopping, paying bills, taking children to activities and visiting friends.

18.3.1 Whether participants were comfortable carrying out daily activities

Eighty-five percent of *recently arrived* refugees at two years felt comfortable or very comfortable carrying out daily activities in New Zealand (see Table A.4.13 in Appendix 4). There was not much difference by refugee type (ranging from 82 percent of Family Reunion refugees to 88 percent of Quota refugees). Nine percent of participants said they felt neither comfortable nor uncomfortable doing daily activities and 6 percent felt uncomfortable. Ninety-three percent of *established* refugees felt comfortable carrying out daily activities.

Eighty-five percent of recently arrived refugees interviewed at two years and 93 percent of established refugees felt comfortable doing daily activities in New Zealand.

18.3.2 Whether daily activities became easier over time

As is shown in Table 18.3, most refugees felt daily activities became easier over time. Ninety-six percent of *recently arrived* refugees at two years and 95 percent of *established* refugees responded this way.

The majority of *recently arrived* and *established* refugees said daily activities became easier over time.

Table 18.3 Whether participants felt daily activities had become easier over time

Whether daily activities became easier	Refugee type			
	Recently arrived (2 years)		Established	
	n	%	n	%
Yes	151	96	173	95
No	7	4	10	5
Total	158	100	183	100

Note

1. Three *recently arrived* refugees did not know and one did not respond. Six *established* refugees did not know.

Participants discussed factors that made daily activities easier over time. The two main factors discussed by the *recently arrived* refugees were becoming more familiar with various places, areas and systems (71 responses) and improved language and communication skills (54 responses). Twenty-seven participants said everyday practise made it easier to carry out daily activities. Nineteen people referred to friendly and helpful people in New Zealand and 18 said having, or receiving help from, family and friends had helped.

Recently arrived refugees interviewed at two years said becoming more familiar with New Zealand places and systems, and improved English skills helped them with daily activities.

“I have been here longer. I know many places and I can do simple things on my own now. My children are here with me so family makes it easy for people to settle.”

Somali Quota refugee, two years

Other factors discussed by participants at two years included:

- easy access to facilities and activities (17 responses);
- having a car or access to a car (16 responses);
- having a driver’s license (10 responses);
- the passing of time (10 responses);
- going to school or taking part in other study (9 responses); and
- workmates (4 responses).

“A shopping centre is very close to my home. Now I’ve got a car it’s much easier to go around.”

Burmese Quota refugee, two years

“Becoming more familiar everyday with such activities. Easy access to doing the activities plus meeting friendly people there. Developing my English communication.”

Iraqi Family Reunion refugee, two years

The main reason *established* refugees gave for daily activities becoming easier over time was improved English language and communication skills (91 responses). Other reasons related to improved knowledge of systems and places in New Zealand, for example, a better orientation of the place they lived (51 responses), knowing how to carry out daily activities (32 responses), and adjusting over time (21 responses).

“My dad has his car to take us to school. I have friends at school. I can speak English; I know the area where we are living now.”

Iraqi Quota refugee, five years

“My language - I have no problems going anywhere, any time.”

Iraqi Quota refugee, five years

Another key factor for *established* refugees was having access to transport (53 responses) or getting their driver’s licence (32 responses). Others referred to kind and helpful people (19 responses), having friends (19 responses), communicating with others (10 responses), family support (6 responses) and assistance from community and support people (6 responses). Ten individuals said having work had made daily activities easier.

“New life was difficult in the beginning, but with time we get used to it and our children speak English. It helps a lot in life.”

Vietnamese Quota refugee, five years

“Lack of transport, and lack of city knowledge had made it hard to carry out day to day activities.”

Somali Quota refugee, five years

18.4 HOW SETTLED PARTICIPANTS FELT IN NEW ZEALAND

Of the recently arrived refugees, 77 percent interviewed at six months and 90 percent at two years said they felt settled or very settled in New Zealand.

At each interview, participants were asked to rate on a five-point scale how settled they felt in New Zealand. While this is a self-assessed rating, it gives an idea of how well participants perceived themselves to be settling into society. Table 18.4 shows that at six months, 20 percent of *recently arrived* refugees felt very settled and a further 57 percent felt somewhat settled. Nine percent said they felt neither settled nor unsettled and 14 percent said they were not very settled or not at all settled. At two years, 90 percent of participants said they felt settled in New Zealand (including 31 percent who felt very settled and 59 percent who felt somewhat settled). Seven percent of participants said they felt neither settled nor unsettled and 4 percent not very settled.

At six months, there were some differences by refugee type in the proportion of participants who felt settled in New Zealand. Fifty-five percent of Convention refugees said they felt settled in New Zealand, compared to 78 percent of Quota refugees and 87 percent of Family Reunion refugees. At two years, there was not much difference by refugee type in the proportion who felt settled.

There was a substantial decrease in the number of Convention refugees who said they were not feeling settled at two years compared to six months. Fourteen Convention refugees said they were not settled at six months compared to two at two years. This is consistent with the proportion of Convention refugees experiencing emotional problems, with a much higher proportion experiencing emotional problems at six months than at two years (see Table 9.8 in Chapter 9). After two years, it is likely that the stress associated with having their refugee status claims determined and becoming established in New Zealand had decreased. Family in New Zealand was an important factor in assisting participants to settle and Convention refugees had less family in New Zealand than did other refugee groups.

Table 18.4 shows the number and proportion of *recently arrived* refugees who felt settled in New Zealand by region of origin. The proportion who said they felt somewhat settled or very settled at six months ranged from 67 percent of the 18 refugees from South East Asia to 79 percent of the 110 refugees from the Middle East. At two years, the proportion who felt settled ranged from 85 percent of the 83 refugees from the Middle East to 96 percent of the 27 refugees from South Asia.

Table 18.4 How settled *recently arrived* refugees felt in New Zealand by refugee type and region

How settled	Refugee type							
	Quota		Convention		Family Reunion		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
6 months								
Very settled	13	14	4	10	24	34	41	20
Somewhat settled	61	64	18	45	37	53	116	57
Neither settled nor unsettled	9	9	4	10	5	7	18	9
Not very settled	11	12	12	30	4	6	27	13
Not at all settled	1	1	2	5	0	0	3	1
Total	95	100	40	100	70	100	205	100
2 years								
Very settled	23	31	6	19	20	38	49	31
Somewhat settled	47	63	21	66	26	49	94	59
Neither settled nor unsettled	3	4	3	9	5	9	11	7
Not very settled	2	3	2	6	2	4	6	4
Not at all settled	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	75	100	32	100	53	100	160	100
	Region of origin							
	Middle East		Horn of Africa		South Asia		South East Asia	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
6 months								
Very settled	26	24	9	20	4	13	2	11
Somewhat settled	61	55	26	58	19	59	10	56
Neither settled nor unsettled	12	11	3	7	2	6	1	6
Not very settled	10	9	6	13	6	19	5	28
Not at all settled	1	1	1	2	1	3	0	0
Total	110	100	45	100	32	100	18	100
2 years								
Very settled	31	37	8	25	7	26	3	17
Somewhat settled	40	48	22	69	19	70	13	72
Neither settled nor unsettled	8	10	0	0	1	4	2	11
Not very settled	4	5	2	6	0	0	0	0
Not at all settled	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	83	100	32	100	27	100	18	100

Note

1. At six months, two did not know and two did not respond. At two years, one did not know and one did not respond.

Table 18.5 shows how settled *established* refugees felt in New Zealand. Overall, 44 percent said they were very settled and 49 percent were somewhat settled. Three percent said they were neither settled nor unsettled and 4 percent said they were not very settled.

There was not much difference in the proportion of *established* refugees who felt settled in New Zealand by region of origin, although seven participants who were not very settled were from the Horn of Africa.

Table 18.5 How settled *established* refugees felt in New Zealand by region

How settled	Region of origin									
	Middle East		Horn of Africa		South Asia		South East Asia		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Very settled	35	44	35	41	6	50	8	67	84	44
Somewhat settled	41	51	42	49	6	50	4	33	93	49
Neither settled nor unsettled	4	5	1	1	0	0	0	0	5	3
Not very settled	0	0	7	8	0	0	0	0	7	4
Total	80	100	85	100	12	100	12	100	189	100

Ninety-three percent of *established* refugees said they felt somewhat settled or very settled in New Zealand.

Table 18.6 shows there was no difference in how settled participants felt by gender. Of the *recently arrived* refugees, 77 percent of women and men said they felt settled at six months as did 88 percent of women and 91 percent of men at two years. Of the *established* refugees, 92 percent of women and 96 percent of men said they felt settled.

There were no differences by gender in how settled participants felt in New Zealand.

Table 18.6 How settled participants felt in New Zealand by gender

How settled	Refugee type					
	Recently arrived				Established	
	6 months		2 years		Female %	Male %
	Female %	Male %	Female %	Male %		
Very settled	22	19	26	35	40	49
Somewhat settled	55	58	62	56	52	47
Neither settled nor unsettled	9	8	9	5	3	2
Not very settled	13	13	3	5	5	3
Not settled at all	1	2	0	0	0	0
Total percent	100	100	100	100	100	100
Total number	97	108	74	86	88	101

Note

- Two *recently arrived* refugees at six months did not know and two did not respond. One person at two years did not know and one did not respond.

18.4.1 What helped participants to settle

All participants were asked what factors were most important in helping them to settle in New Zealand. The most important factor discussed at each interview was having family (or friends) in New Zealand (see Table 18.7). Of the *recently*

“Because my husband was living in New Zealand before me, so the information he gave me and his directions and advice helped me to settle in New Zealand.”

Afghan Family Reunion refugee, six months

arrived refugees, Quota and Family Reunion refugees most often responded this way. A few *established* refugees said family reunification or the prospect of this helped them to settle. Another important factor across all groups was having government income support.

“My son's family live next door. I stay in [the] Burmese community. I receive enough money from the government. I've got a chance to study. All these things help me settle well.”

Burmese Quota refugee, six months

Many participants discussed the importance of English, including having access to English language classes or learning (or already knowing English). A number said that access to education (aside from English language classes) assisted them to settle. This was particularly important for *established* refugees.

“My family are here. We have learned the language, I've finished a training course and I'm trying to find a good job. New Zealanders are very helpful and friendly, and the WINZ [W&I] benefit also is very helpful.”

Iraqi Quota refugee, five years

“All my family members are here. It is a main point that I feel safe and settled here.”

Burmese Quota refugee, two years

Others discussed factors such as their children being able to attend school and learn English, having a safe and peaceful life, and the friendly and helpful people in New Zealand. Some participants at two years and a number of *established* refugees said finding work was an important factor in settling in New Zealand. Other responses related to the support they received from various people and agencies. Some said that having access to healthcare and housing as well as support from other government agencies had helped. Some said support from their own ethnic group, from their sponsor, and from agencies such as the Refugee and Migrant Service (RMS) assisted them to settle.

“Even I have language problem, but I feel I belong to this country because my children are happy and safe and going to school.”

Afghan Family Reunion refugee, two years

Table 18.7 Factors that helped participants to settle in New Zealand

Refugee type		
Recently arrived		Established (responses)
6 months (responses)	2 years (responses)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Friends and family in New Zealand (55) ▪ Government benefit (43) ▪ Access to English language classes (36) ▪ Having a safe and peaceful life (24) ▪ Seeing children go to school and learn English (19) ▪ Access to education (other than English) (18) ▪ Access to healthcare (13) ▪ Access to housing (7) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Having family in New Zealand (53) ▪ Learning English (39) ▪ Government benefit (33) ▪ Access to education (21) ▪ Friendly people in New Zealand (20) ▪ Children being able to learn English and/or attend school (17) ▪ Support from government agencies (16) ▪ Support from other agencies (such as the RMS) (16) ▪ Support from ethnic group (15) ▪ Assistance finding housing (15) ▪ Support from sponsor (13) ▪ Work (12) ▪ Having a car or getting a driver's license (12) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Having family in New Zealand (74) ▪ Support from the government (including income support) (61) ▪ Education or training (38) ▪ Learning or knowing English (33) ▪ Feeling safe and secure and/or having freedom (30) ▪ Friendly and helpful people (28) ▪ Children being able to attend school and have a future (27) ▪ Work (28) ▪ Friends (21) ▪ Suitable housing (18) ▪ Access to healthcare (17) ▪ Support from ethnic group (16) ▪ Support from sponsor (11)

“My husband has a part time job. He is studying. We hope he will get a job when he finishes training. We have a car now. It makes it easier for daily life.”

Burmese Quota refugee, two years

“My life is completely protected; I have been provided with good healthcare; I have been helped by the government from A to Z.”

Vietnamese Quota refugee.

Note

1. Participants could give multiple responses.

“Help and support of agencies like the RMS, PEETO, sponsors, WINZ [W&I] improving my English.”

Afghan Quota refugee, two years

18.5 WHAT PARTICIPANTS HOPED TO ACHIEVE IN NEW ZEALAND

The majority of *recently arrived* and *established* refugees intended to stay in New Zealand for the long term (see Table 18.8).⁶⁶ Ninety-eight percent of *recently arrived* refugees interviewed at two years and the same proportion of *established* refugees said they intended to stay in New Zealand.

⁶⁶ *Recently arrived* refugees interviewed at six months were not asked if they intended to stay in New Zealand in the long term.

Table 18.8 Whether participants intended to stay in New Zealand in the long term

Intend to stay long term	Refugee type	
	Recently arrived (2 years)	Established
	%	%
Yes	98	98
No	2	2
Total percent	100	100
Total number	160	184

Note

1. One *recently arrived* refugee did not respond and one did not know. Five *established* refugees did not know.

“A successful study in my specialisation. English language studies. Getting a good job. Managing to get a wife from my country.”

Iraqi Quota refugee, six months

All participants (apart from the small number who did not intend to stay in New Zealand) were asked about the types of things they hoped to achieve in New Zealand. At six months, many said they wanted to improve their English (56 responses) and/or be reunited with family members who were overseas (37 responses). A large number of participants (107) discussed wanting to find employment.

Others had aspirations that are similar to the general New Zealand population. This included having a good future and education for their children (30 responses), furthering their own education (30 responses), buying a house (22 responses), getting particular skills or qualifications (12 responses) and starting a business (11 responses). Nine people said they wanted to improve their financial situation. A few individuals specified that they wanted to become New Zealand citizens (8 responses) and contribute to New Zealand society (6 responses).

“Find employment, work hard, save money to buy a house.”

Sri Lankan Family Reunion refugee, six months

“Find pathway to work in theatre, and in acting, TV, movie, drama. If there is an Arabic programme, I would like to work with them because I have good experience in this field.”

Iraqi Quota refugee, two years

At two years, the main thing participants wanted to achieve was finding a job (102 responses). This might be any job or a job in a specific occupation, such as an engineer, lawyer or teacher (15 responses). Other responses at two years were very similar to at six months, although a smaller number discussed wanting to sponsor family to New Zealand and a few said they wanted to improve their health.

“For my children to get a high level education and myself to learn the language and get a job.”

Afghan Convention Refugee, two years

“I want to contribute for the development of this country and develop myself and family.”

Sri Lankan Convention refugee, two years

When *established* refugees were asked what they wanted to achieve in New Zealand, they responded as many other New Zealanders would. They wanted a good job (68 responses), to be educated and gain qualifications (65 responses), for their children to have a good education and a secure future (52 responses) and to own a house (45 responses). Thirty-four participants said they would like to start a business.

“A good future for all my kids; keeping all of my family secure (keeping the security to my family for good); becoming an active individual to help people in this New Zealand community.”

Iraqi Quota refugee, five years

Another important aspiration for *established* refugees was to be reunited with family members (37 responses). Twenty-one participants said they wanted to improve their English. Thirteen participants said they wanted to settle well in New Zealand and six said they wanted to become active members of society. A few participants said they wanted to improve their health (5 responses). A few participants felt they might not achieve what they would like to do but wanted their children to succeed in New Zealand.

“I was unable to achieve anything but my only hope is that my children will learn and gain a New Zealand qualification.”

Somali Quota refugee, five years

“To support my children; to obtain a good job, and to settle here.”

Sri Lankan Quota refugee, five years

“Have my own business, own house, bring my sister from Kurdistan-Iraq. And visit my home land (Kurdistan) once in my life.”

Iraqi Quota refugee, five years

18.5.1 New Zealand citizenship

Research participants were asked about their citizenship intentions. Table 18.9 shows the numbers and proportion of *recently arrived* refugees interviewed at two years and *established* refugees who had applied for citizenship, intended to apply for citizenship or who already had citizenship. No participants said they did not intend to apply for New Zealand citizenship.

At two years, 90 percent of participants said they intended to apply for citizenship and 4 percent had applied. Eight Convention refugees and one Family Reunion refugee said they already had citizenship in New Zealand. This is likely to be because Convention refugees had been in New Zealand for longer than other participants while waiting for their refugee status to be determined.⁶⁷ Eighty-three percent of *established* refugees (151 individuals) said they had citizenship. A further 8 percent said they had applied and 10 percent intended to apply.

Ninety percent of *recently arrived* refugees interviewed at two years said they intended to apply for New Zealand citizenship. Eighty-three percent of *established* refugees said they had citizenship in New Zealand.

⁶⁷ To be eligible for citizenship applicants need to have been in New Zealand for at least three years (or two years if married to a New Zealand citizen).

Table 18.9 Whether *recently arrived* refugees interviewed at two years and *established* refugees had, or intended to apply for, New Zealand citizenship

Had/intended to apply for citizenship	Refugee type									
	Recently arrived (2 years)								Established	
	Quota		Convention		Family Reunion		Total		n	%
n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%			
Yes, I have applied for citizenship	2	3	2	6	2	4	6	4	14	8
Yes, I intend to apply for citizenship	73	97	21	68	47	94	141	90	18	10
Yes, I have citizenship	0	0	8	26	1	2	9	6	151	83
Total	75	100	31	100	50	100	156	100	183	100

Note

1. Of the *recently arrived* refugees interviewed at two years, four did not respond and two did not know. Of the *established* refugees, five did not know and one did not respond.

18.6 FACTORS THAT COULD HELP REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT

Recently arrived refugees interviewed at two years and *established* refugees were asked if they felt there was anything that could be put in place to help refugees with their resettlement in New Zealand. Forty-eight percent of participants at two years believed something could be put in place. A smaller proportion of Convention refugees (28 percent) than Quota or Family Reunion refugees (57 and 47 percent respectively) felt this way. Eleven percent of participants at two years said they did not know.

Sixty-one percent of *established* refugees suggested something that could be put in place to assist refugee resettlement in New Zealand. A further 10 percent did not know.

Seventy-seven participants interviewed at two years suggested things that could be put in place. Their suggestions fell into the following categories education and language help (29 responses), family reunification (28 responses), accommodation help (25 responses), financial help (22 responses), orientation (22 responses), and work (22 responses).

For those who felt refugees needed more help with education and language, the most common suggestion related to providing more classes and cutting down waiting lists. A few said students needed more help with their studies at school and others said more bilingual teachers were needed. In terms of family reunification, participants stressed that it was difficult to settle without their families and that refugees needed more help to bring their families to New Zealand. A few mentioned they needed help understanding family reunification immigration policies.

In relation to accommodation, participants wanted more help finding housing or wanted more suitable houses. A few people felt it would be good to provide refugees with furnished houses. When it came to finance, half of the 22 participants said refugees should have more financial support while others said

“Family reunification. It’s very important for refugees to be reunited with their family members. It is hard to settle without all your family members being with you.”

Somali Quota refugee, two years

more financial support was needed in the first two years of resettlement. The suggestions relating to refugees finding work included providing more job opportunities for refugees and providing more job training.

“Give them a job. A special service is needed to help refugees learn English and find a job.”

Iranian Convention refugee, two years

Others felt refugees needed more general support and orientation in New Zealand. This included providing a support person to refugee families or individuals and providing this support for as long as it was needed.

“Ask support persons to stay longer with the refugees. Teach them the big differences in cultures. Some more financial help for the first two years. Help them get their beloved family members to New Zealand quickly and easily.”

Iraqi Quota refugee, two years

One-hundred and sixteen *established* refugees discussed improvements that could be made to help refugees resettle in New Zealand. The most common suggestion from these individuals was to make it easier for refugees to bring their family members to New Zealand (44 responses). Some participants felt it was not fair that some refugees had a number of family members in New Zealand while others had few or none.

“Equal opportunity on family reunification for refugees. That is, some of the refugees have large number of family members in New Zealand; some do not have any at all.”

Ethiopian Quota refugee, five years

Other *established* refugees had suggestions relating to helping refugees to find work. These suggestions included job placements, creating more job opportunities for refugees and providing more job training and apprenticeships (32 responses). Thirty-four individuals felt more English language classes (or more intensive classes) should be provided for refugees and others felt there should be more bilingual teachers and government workers (9 responses). Twenty-five individuals said refugees should receive more financial assistance and 20 suggested providing more help with finding suitable housing.

“They should provide more accommodation for low income people and refugees, setting up some factories which give jobs to them. And this also will help the country's economy. To help the depressed refugee, make family reunions to bring some of family members to New Zealand based on humanitarian reasons and not based on lottery.”

Iranian Quota refugee, five years

Other *established* refugees said refugees needed to be provided with more general information about life in New Zealand (16 responses) and others suggested refugees needed a support person for longer (9 responses). A few

“I think to educate New Zealanders to understand that we didn't choose to become a refugee, it could happen to anyone.”

Somali Quota
refugee, five years

individuals said refugees' differences needed to be respected (6 responses) and others said refugees needed help dealing with discrimination (4 responses).

"If the government limited the number of intake to be acceptable for New Zealanders, it would be better because then people wouldn't have negative views of refugees, because I experienced some people who don't have a good view of refugees and don't like refugees."

Iranian Quota refugee, five years

Some participants talked about the important role ethnic communities played in refugee resettlement and suggested more resources be provided to assist with this. One example given was employing people from refugee communities in government agencies and other organisations that provide services to refugees. A few thought refugees should play more of a role in their own resettlement based on their own needs.

"Establish mechanism to co-ordinate the resettlement of refugees. Address needs according to individual needs rather than general solution. Set time for resettlement and monitor how people are moving towards these goals. Inform the role of the individual in resettlement."

Somali Quota refugee, five years

This point was also raised in focus groups with service providers. Many service providers felt that strong and structured communities were a good source of support. The providers all felt that people within refugee communities were the best people to help members of their own community. When the community was well established this was easier to do, especially if people had cross-cultural skills. While some providers felt refugee communities needed assistance, other providers felt that it was better to let communities go through the process of building and developing themselves rather than putting structures in place for this to happen.

"Need stronger empowered ethnic communities to work with these people."

Service provider, focus group

18.7 PARTICULAR ISSUES FOR MEN AND WOMEN

18.7.1 Particular issues for women

Female participants were asked if they had experienced particular difficulties living in New Zealand. Of the *recently arrived* female refugees, only two participants at six months and one respondent at two years said they had experienced particular difficulties in New Zealand. Two of these individuals said they received unwanted attention because of the way they dressed and looked after their children.

Ten out of the 88 *established* female refugees said they had experienced difficulties particular to being a woman in New Zealand. A number of these participants said the main difficulty they faced related to the way they dressed (4 responses). One participant said the way she dressed attracted unwanted

"Employing social workers from the refugee communities. Employing bilingual teachers, employing bilingual health workers, employing bilingual WINZ [W&I] workers, and bilingual workers especially in NZIS."

Ethiopian Quota

"Wearing different clothing, which may attract attention and abuse."

Somali Quota refugee, five years

attention and another perceived that wearing a head scarf made it difficult to get a job. A few participants said they found it difficult to learn English or find work because they were busy at home looking after children. One woman said she did not feel safe at night.

The small number of female participants who said they had experienced particular difficulties contrasts with some literature. For example, Guerin et al. (2003) discuss some of the challenges Islamic women from Somalia face adapting to a westernised country. The paper notes that these women often come to New Zealand from labour intensive, farming backgrounds, whereas their lifestyle in New Zealand is more sedentary. This, along with a change in diet, limited access to appropriate physical activity opportunities and the responsibility of caring for often large families can lead to a number of health problems.

18.7.2 Particular issues for men

Only a small number of male participants said there were particular difficulties for men living in New Zealand. Of the *recently arrived* refugees, one individual at six months and two at two years said they had experienced difficulties particular to being a man. Two *established* refugees said they had experienced difficulties.

The difficulties discussed by the *recently arrived* refugees related to not having work, and worry about family overseas. One *established* refugee discussed issues with his relationship ending and another felt there were inequalities between men and women in New Zealand.

“Men have less power than women in this country no matter if they claim to be equal, but they are not. There must be a society to defend the right of men to stop women taking advantage of them.”

Iranian Quota refugee, five years

18.7.3 Findings from focus groups

Service providers discussed in focus groups the different roles of refugee men and women in New Zealand. Providers felt that refugees often struggled with the equality between men and women in New Zealand and with women having rights that they were not used to (such as choosing to dress differently or having joint bank accounts). They felt this often led to conflict between men and women and to marriage breakdowns.

“Contraception requested by women, rejected by men – [this leads to] marriage breakdowns, women find they don’t have to tolerate domestic violence – [this leads to] marriage breakdowns.”

Service provider, focus group

Some of the providers felt there was a lack of support for refugee men. They felt that because coming to New Zealand meant they had to adapt to a huge cultural change, they needed extra support. One of the main difficulties identified for men was their loss of role/status, especially adjusting to the equality between men and women.

“Men lose status, as can't be provider. What influence they had overseas – i.e. politics – is no longer meaningful.”

Service provider, focus group

One example discussed by a group of Christchurch providers was that women may not be able to carry out the housework because of trauma and so men are required to do this, but often do not have the skills. The providers felt that courses for men on household chores and child care would be beneficial. Some providers felt refugee communities should be involved in teaching these skills to men.

A group of Burmese men said they had difficulties adjusting to the role women had in New Zealand society and the men sometimes felt that they lost the power in their relationships. One man mentioned his wife was better at English than he was and he felt the power level in the relationship increased for the one who could speak the better English. One man talked about stress in his relationship because he disciplines their son, and his wife does not like this which often led to arguments and domestic violence.

“In Burma it would not be a problem if the husband physical beats his wife, so that is a problem.”

Burmese man, focus group

An issue raised by a group of Kurdish men was that it was traditional for them to have arranged marriages (usually between the ages of 18 and 20 years). They had found there were not many marriage prospects due to the small size of the community in Auckland and this was a problem.

“In Kurdish community, if you are single you don't have respect. But if you are married, you are shown respect as a family.”

Kurdish man, focus group

Somali and Iranian women discussed the role of women in New Zealand society. The Iranian women felt that their role as women was substantially different in New Zealand than it was in Iran. They commented that women had more rights and were more independent in New Zealand. They felt that Iranian men had trouble adjusting to the new rights women had, and in many cases this had led to problems and the breakdown of relationships. The Somali women, on the other hand, felt that their role as women in New Zealand had not changed from how it was in Somalia.

“Men here do take advantage of the culture. They try to become like Kiwis. Like for them it is OK to have a friend of opposite sex. But if the lady makes the same kind of effort, the man doesn't accept it. So this is another reason for a split. Men become westernised, but they don't want that for the wives.”

Iranian woman, focus group

“Still the same. Some used to drive in Somalia, some drive here as well.”

Somali woman, focus group

18.8 SUMMARY

The factors that many research participants liked about New Zealand such as kind and friendly people, safety and security and freedom, reflect what many did not have in their former countries. Many were reluctant to discuss what they did not like about New Zealand, although a number of *established* refugees said they found it difficult being separated from family members.

As well as improved English language skills and orientation to New Zealand, access to transport and having a driver's license were important factors in daily activities becoming easier over time.

Of the *recently arrived* refugees, Convention refugees said they were the least settled at six months, while after two years there was not much difference between the refugee groups. Overall, nine in ten *recently arrived* refugees said they felt at least somewhat settled at two years. No participants from South Asia or South East Asia said they felt unsettled at two years. Of the *established* refugees, 93 percent said they felt at least somewhat settled in New Zealand. There were no differences in how settled participants felt by gender.

Across both *recently arrived* and *established* refugees, an important factor in assisting participants to settle was having family in New Zealand. Convention refugees had less family in New Zealand which partly explains why they were less settled than other participants at six months. Having a government benefit and knowing or learning English were also important. A range of other factors were discussed including having a safe and peaceful life and having access to other government and non-government services and support.

There was strong importance placed on citizenship, with all participants intending to apply or having already applied for citizenship. Eighty-three percent of *established* refugees said they had citizenship in New Zealand.

Only a small number of participants said they had experienced particular difficulties in New Zealand due to their gender. More women than men said they had experienced difficulties, particularly those from the *established* group. Difficulties for men and women came through more strongly in focus groups, and often related to refugees experiencing difficulties adjusting to the equality that men and women experience in New Zealand, including women having more rights than they were used to and a loss of status for men.

Participants suggested a range of improvements that could be made to assist refugee resettlement in New Zealand. This included providing more English language classes, providing more job opportunities, work training and apprenticeships, providing more assistance with finding housing, and being provided with a support person for as long as this was required. A number of participants (particularly *established* refugees) stressed the importance of having their family in New Zealand and said they needed more help with family reunification.

06 | SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

19. ISSUES RAISED BY THE RESEARCH

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20. OVERALL CONCLUSION

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SECTION 06

These two chapters conclude the report by outlining particular issues and providing an overall conclusion.

Resettlement is a journey. It is a process of learning, adapting and understanding. Coming to a new country with a different culture, language, religion, and traditions, is a challenging venture into the unknown. While this research examined the first five years of refugee resettlement, it is very evident that the process of resettlement is ongoing. On the evidence of this research, some refugees may never get to the place where they can participate in this country's life to the same extent as other residents. Adaptation occurs at a different pace for the diverse groups of refugees. In general, younger people adapted faster.

Nearly all participants reported that New Zealand provided them with a safe and pleasant environment and that for the most part they encountered friendly and helpful people, both in daily life and when dealing with organisations. What participants liked about New Zealand reflected what most did not have in their former countries - freedom and democracy, safety and security, and peace and quiet. These are probably the most important mitigating factors for refugees when dealing with the challenges of resettlement, in particular their ability to become self-supporting. Safety and security and reduced stress were important reasons for improvements in participants' health.

Overall, there was a similarity in responses and issues raised across the *recently arrived* and *established* groups. This finding is important, suggesting the trends and issues that emerged are likely to be similar for other cohorts of refugees.

19 ISSUES RAISED BY THE RESEARCH

19.1 INTRODUCTION

This research project was initiated to further understand the resettlement experiences of refugees in New Zealand in order to improve support systems and provide information to better inform the development of refugee policy. The information gathered in this research will be used by a number of government and community sector agencies and will also provide an important feed into the development of the national Immigration Settlement Strategy.

This chapter defines some of the main issues that impact on refugee resettlement and provides some direction for mitigation. The government recently announced (in May 2004) the national Immigration Settlement Strategy, which is an important strategy and very relevant to the issues discussed in this conclusion. The Strategy is briefly described below. The main issues arising from the research are then discussed, including the following:

- the importance of acknowledging and responding to refugee diversity (one size, or type, of service delivery will not meet all needs);
- refugees not having an understanding of available services or their entitlements;
- that entering the labour market is the greatest challenge;
- a need for more help with accessing English language training and suitable housing;
- that the provision of health services and schooling is working well; and
- support agencies are offering a good service to refugees.

19.2 NATIONAL IMMIGRATION SETTLEMENT STRATEGY

In November 2003, Cabinet agreed to the national Immigration Settlement Strategy for migrants, refugees and their families. The Strategy's six goals for migrants and refugees are that they:

1. obtain employment appropriate to their qualifications and skills;
2. are confident using English in a New Zealand setting, or can access appropriate language support to bridge the gap;
3. are able to access appropriate information and responsive services that are available to the wider community (for example, housing, education, and services for children);
4. form supportive social networks and establish a sustainable community identity;
5. feel safe expressing their ethnic identity and are accepted by, and are part of, the wider host community; and
6. participate in civic, community and social activities.

The initial focus of this Strategy is to improve the way career and labour market information is tailored to the needs of refugees and migrants, to provide extra funding for adult English language tuition, to increase English language resources in schools, and to improve resourcing for the assessment of refugee qualifications.

The establishment of a national network of migrant resource services will provide a point of contact for providing information to refugees and migrants. Additional core funding has been given to the Refugee and Migrant Service (RMS), to assist with the resettlement of refugees, so we can ensure that refugees continue to have quality services and assistance provided to them. In total, funding has been increased for these initiatives by \$62.39 million between 2004/05 and 2007/08. While not all of this funding is specifically for refugee services (it includes migrants), it does establish the intent of the government to respond to, and resource, settlement initiatives.

Other settlement initiatives recently undertaken include funding for the Language Line, an interpreting service offering 35 different languages for clients of certain government agencies (\$1.266 million for 2004/05), and funding to provide ongoing employment services for refugees and migrants (\$21 million over four years to the Ministry of Social Development). In addition, funding for settlement service programmes, run by a variety of non-government organisations, is administered by the Department of Labour (DoL). Services funded in the 2003/04 year (\$1.837 million) were orientation programmes (including cross-cultural 'relating well in New Zealand' courses), employment linkage services, and support for Citizen Advice Bureaux for the provision of immigration related information and settlement services.

19.3 ISSUES THAT IMPACT ON REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT

19.3.1 Refugees are a diverse group and face diverse issues

Refugees come from diverse backgrounds and the issues they face depend on their particular circumstances. Factors such as their ability to communicate in English, the level of support from their community, and their education and skill levels mean that individuals and families will require different levels of support. Refugees coming through the Refugee Quota were found to be the most needy in terms of service provision.

Some significant groupings to emerge from the research as needing individualised assistance were:

- **Gender:** The progressive nature of New Zealand society's attitude to gender relations had an impact on both men and women:

Men, in particular, struggle with a loss of role and status and with adjusting to the equal status that men and women enjoy in New Zealand. Men also noted some of the difficulties they experienced due to differences in parenting styles, in particular around disciplining their children. Support groups and different communications are provided to women to educate them on the freedom and role of women in New Zealand society. However, it appears there is a gap in services to men that can orientate them to the different roles that men and women hold in New Zealand society and, where necessary, support them to change.

Women were generally pleased to have more freedom, but some noted the stress it put on their relationships with their partners. As with men, women face particular barriers, often relating to culturally appropriate behaviour, for example not sharing facilities with men, childcare obligations limiting their ability to participate in English language and other training opportunities, or their appearance and dress

making them stand out when out and about. For girls, wearing traditional dress at school, such as a head scarf, was an issue, and attracted unwanted attention.

More females than males reported their health getting worse in New Zealand. Decline in health was often due to developing a medical condition such as asthma or because of stress-related issues, including concern about family overseas. Guerin et al. (2003) discuss factors contributing to a decline in Islamic women's health. A comparatively sedentary lifestyle in New Zealand, combined with a change in diet, limited access to physical activity, and the responsibility of caring for large families can lead to various health issues.

- **Age:**

Older refugees were less likely to have learnt about New Zealand culture, and found it more difficult to learn English. Some simply thought they were “too old”. Most *recently arrived* refugees who had not learnt English in New Zealand were aged 40 years or older. Older refugees had the poorest English ability and were most likely to require assistance from interpreters and translators. More than half of *established* refugees aged 40 years or older said they still needed help to settle at five years.

In contrast, young people showed a greater degree of adaptability. Attendance at school assisted with this as it placed young refugees daily in an English speaking world in which they learnt New Zealand values and history. However, this too presents challenges. Although teenagers reported enjoying the freedom of New Zealand culture and the opportunities available to them, they were less comfortable with what they perceived as a lack of respect from other teenagers for adults in authority. It was found that good supportive teachers and extra assistance with English language helped with settling into school.

- **Refugee type:**

There were some significant differences by refugee type:

Quota refugees - despite receiving the most support in New Zealand, Quota refugees faced the most difficulties. Substantially more than other participants felt they still needed help to settle at two years. After five years, many *established* Quota refugees indicated that still needed help to settle. Quota refugees rated their English language ability lower than did other participants. After five years, more than one quarter of *established* Quota refugees said they could not speak English well.

Convention refugees – Convention refugees stood out from other participants in many areas, although many were from South Asia (Sri Lanka) and so these findings could be country specific. On arrival they had better English language ability, had completed a higher level of education and had more previous work experience. Despite this, at six months, Convention refugees reported feeling the least settled, and were the most likely to have experienced emotional problems. A key reason that participants gave for feeling settled was having family in New Zealand. A number of Convention refugees were either here alone or had smaller families in New Zealand than other participants. There were notably greater numbers of Convention refugees in employment, although most of those employed at two years were working part-time.

Family Reunion refugees - At six months, Family Reunion refugees reported feeling the most settled, had the least difficulties making friends and received more help in some areas than other participants (including with income support and budgeting). Having family in New Zealand provided invaluable support for Family Reunion refugees. They showed an improvement in English ability at two years compared to arrival and there was a small increase in the proportion in paid employment. An important reason for success in all of these areas was the support provided by family. However, they still faced difficulties, particularly in cases where their families were stressed and struggling financially. Family Reunion refugees were the most likely to report difficulties with accessing study and training, often because of English language difficulties or because of cost. As a consequence they were the least likely to have taken part in study and training. They were less likely than other participants to get the help they needed finding work and reported more long-term health problems than other participants.

▪ **Region of origin and ethnicity:**

The socio-economic and ethnic background of participants was important in several areas of resettlement. For example, refugees from the Middle East and the Horn of Africa reported more discrimination. While they come from countries that were likely to have figured negatively in the media during the research period, they also had more visible differences in both dress and culture. In addition, the children of Somali refugees often grew up in camps and therefore their level of education was lower than their peers from other countries.

Iranian women who took part in focus groups were less satisfied with their housing in New Zealand, having in many cases come from quite privileged situations to one of comparative poverty (state housing and benefits). On the other hand, Somali women who had come to New Zealand from refugee camps were very satisfied with their housing.

The importance of, and methods of maintaining, culture depended on ethnicity. Coming from the same ethnic background did not necessarily create a 'community', but it was found that strong, structured communities provided good support, where they existed. Refugees from South East Asia were most likely to receive support from their ethnic group, while South Asians were the least likely, reflecting both the cohesiveness of the respective communities as well as the amount of help participants required.

When asked how settled they felt in New Zealand, participants from South Asia and South East Asia gave similar ratings, with most feeling somewhat or very settled (although many South East Asians felt they still needed help to settle, even after five years). It is possible that New Zealand's location in the Asia-Pacific region helps to diminish some of the challenges of resettlement for these refugees, such as adapting to available foods and maintaining contact with relatives in their former countries.

▪ **Length of time in New Zealand:**

Although the need for support is ongoing, the first six months was the time of greatest need. Participants reported needing help in the following areas: income

support; health; accessing education and training; and local services. In the first six months, emotional problems were much more likely to be reported, the use of healthcare workers (including specialists) was the highest and there was the greatest need for interpreters and translators. *Recently arrived* refugees tended to move house the most in their first six months.

Issues that were still problems at two and five year intervals were the need for support with learning English, getting work, and assistance with finances. Most participants reported that daily activities became easier over time.

Established refugees had been in New Zealand for long enough that many had sponsored or were intending to sponsor family members. This was the main area in which they reported needing help. In some areas, *established* refugees tended to report more difficulties than did other participants. These areas included with bringing up their children in New Zealand, experiences of discrimination, and women experiencing particular difficulties (for example, with accessing English language classes). *Established* refugees were the most likely to report not having enough income to meet their needs, although a number were sending money to family overseas as well as supporting, often large, families in New Zealand.

More *established* refugees (who were from the Refugee Quota) were employed and had better English language ability than Quota refugees at two years. This provides an indication that, over time, we could expect to see continued improvement in outcomes for *recently arrived* Quota refugees.

Implications

It is important that resettlement assistance is tailored to the needs of the individual refugee. One size will not suit all. Characteristics such as differing ethnic and cultural backgrounds, English language ability, employment history, health status and the amount of time spent in camps all come together to indicate an individual's need for service provision including the type and quantity of assistance required.

Service providers' noted that New Zealanders were largely ignorant of refugees' cultures and position in the community, and lacked patience in dealing with difference. Measures to increase the public's understanding of other cultures would be useful. Overall, many of these issues are well-known, but it is important that service providers and the wider community remain sensitive to these issues, and seek to further understand, the variety of refugee needs.

19.3.2 Refugees lack an understanding of available services

Many refugees lack an understanding of available services, including how to access these services and their entitlements. A key reason participants at six months gave for not getting the help they needed (apart from communication problems due to a lack of English) was not knowing where to go to get the help they required. Many refugees struggle to survive on a benefit and it was suggested they do not fully understand their entitlements or the wider range of services provided by the Ministry of Social Development's Work and Income (W&I).

Many refugees find it difficult to settle while they are still faced with uncertainty surrounding the welfare of other family members overseas. This uncertainty can

cause stress that impacts on health, the ability to find employment, and in more extreme cases, the ability to undertake daily activities. One example was a lack of understanding of how to proceed with applying for family reunification and who eligible family members might be. There remains some confusion over the new family sponsored immigration policies introduced in 2001.

Refugees often had expectations of the health system based on what they were used to in their home countries. Some of the difficulties reported regarding healthcare were due to a lack of familiarity with the New Zealand health system, such as the expectation of a prescription for higher doses of medication, or medication that is patient-specified. The data revealed a high number of hospital visits compared to what would be expected of the general population.

The New Zealand school system is very different to what refugees are used to, particularly for those without prior formal education. Although most parents were satisfied with their children's schooling, some lacked an understanding of the school system and what their children were studying.

The research also suggests that access to interpreters is not sufficient, or fully understood. Many refugees use their children as interpreters in some situations, including times when it was necessary to remove the child from school, which is far from ideal.

Implications

A lack of awareness of available services can mean that refugees do not access some of the specialist or generic services that are available to them. A key goal of the national Immigration Settlement Strategy is that refugees and migrants are able to access appropriate information and responsive services. The most recent budget (2004) includes funding for establishing a national network of migrant resource services that will provide a clearly identified point of contact for providing information to migrants and refugees. It will be important that these new services are widely advertised within refugee communities.

There are a number of areas where refugees would benefit from improved information:

- **Prior to coming to New Zealand:** Most refugees knew little about New Zealand before arrival. It is important that accurate information about the realities of resettling in New Zealand is provided. This information would assist with managing expectations, especially around the need for good English and the difficulties they will face finding employment. Providers also believed that refugees come to New Zealand with expectations that are then not met, and so have to adapt to disappointment in some areas. This was particularly true of access to housing and employment. Recently, there have been enhancements to the information provided to Quota refugees before arrival, with an emphasis on providing a realistic picture of life in New Zealand.
- **Rights and entitlements:** In many cases refugees were not clear about their rights to service from agencies and different types of service provider. For example, it can be difficult for refugees to find out about the range of services and

entitlements that W&I can offer. Aside from language barriers, many refugees may not be aware of the roles that W&I has, such as providing employment related training. Material and support should include orientation to the role of W&I.

- **Health system:** Refugees require more information about the New Zealand health system, the way medicine is prescribed and the central importance of GPs for general healthcare.
- **Family reunification:** Refugees require improved explanation of the purpose and nature of immigration policies, particularly the application processes, the family members eligible, and assistance with obtaining necessary documentation.
- **School system:** Orientation to the school system for parents would be beneficial. In particular, the types of topics covered, the manner in which schools operate, and the expectations schools have of students and parents.
- **Interpreters/translators:** Refugees require increased awareness of eligibility for interpreters.
- **Strong, structured ethnic communities:** can be a valuable source of support. In some cases, communities require assistance to build their own support networks. Refugees with cross-cultural skills are often the best people to assist other refugees. Migrant resource services, to be established under the national Immigration Settlement Strategy, could be used to help refugee communities by assisting with materials, meeting rooms and other resources.

19.3.3 Entering the labour market may pose the biggest challenge for refugees

Obtaining work is *very* difficult for refugees. They face many barriers including language, adapting to different work cultures, and employers' reluctance to either employ someone from a different cultural background or to take a 'risk' with someone they know little about (i.e. little documentation of work history or qualifications). Subsequently few were in employment, even at five years. Those employed were often in part-time and/or low paid work.

The issues of financial hardship, beneficiary status, and levels of employment are interconnected. The stress of these factors also impacts on other areas of resettlement such as social integration, language learning, housing and health.

It was noted by both refugees and some service providers that the benefit could be a barrier to employment. Refugees were most likely to find low-paying jobs which result in an income not substantially higher than the benefit. When travel and clothing were taken into account, with the subsequent loss of being available for childcare, the cost of taking employment could be high. Certainly the high numbers of refugees working part-time and claiming a benefit suggest apprehension about leaving the security of government-assisted income.

Many refugees felt they struggled to survive on the benefit. The difficulty of making ends meet on a benefit, and the lack of incentive to take a low-paying job, are issues that would affect all New Zealand beneficiaries.

For those actively seeking employment, lack of ability with English was the greatest impediment. Paradoxically, those in employment reported an improvement in their language skills through interaction with colleagues. That few refugees with prior work experience found work in the field in which they had trained is also a concern.

Cultural difference can be a challenge for those in employment. Dress is one, more obvious, difference, but service providers also reported the difficulties arising from different attitudes to work. The example cited was notification to an employer of sickness which the refugees were not used to being required to do.

Implications

Most refugees require much assistance with finding work. They arrive with high expectations of supporting themselves and their families and become disillusioned. With time, it becomes increasingly difficult to move from the security of income support. Most employment opportunities are low paid, and many who obtained jobs were working part-time. Stair-casing refugees from work orientation in the New Zealand environment to work experience would be a useful approach. In particular, refugees require:

- support to move off benefits;
- a consistent and streamlined service with steps towards employment (including job hunting techniques, interview skills, work place orientation, work culture and employer expectations); and
- assistance with job placements.

The government has taken some steps in this area. A goal of the national Immigration Settlement Strategy is that refugees and migrants obtain employment appropriate to their qualifications and skills. The Ministry of Social Development has funding of \$21 million over four years to provide ongoing employment services for refugees and migrants, to enable them to connect with the labour market. This funding was provided as part of the 2003 Budget. Another initiative provides funding for the New Zealand Qualifications Authority for assessing overseas qualifications of refugees.

19.3.4 Refugees need more help with accessing English language and housing

Ability with English impacts on all other areas of resettlement. As noted above, it can be a major factor in unemployment, and makes it difficult to make full use of the services that W&I provide. Without a reasonable level of English, social integration becomes a greater challenge. Discrimination is more likely to occur in situations where someone loses patience with trying to understand a person with limited English language ability. In essence, refugees are unlikely to fully access their entitlements or participate in society to the extent desired while they have poor English.

Issues around access to English-language classes arose for a number of refugees (most often women who care for children in the home), overall however, there seem to be many and varied options for language learning. An increase in awareness of these options may be necessary, including entitlements to free classes, student allowances and loans. The ESOL Home Tutor Scheme has been praised and could perhaps be used more frequently by those women who are not able to attend classes.

Many of the issues raised in association with housing are not unique to refugees. The issues are those that affect all low income families such as a shortfall in homes available through the Housing New Zealand Corporation, and the financial stresses of market rents for those who are need to rent from a private landlord. This could also result from a lack of understanding of entitlements from W&I, where some families may not be claiming an accommodation allowance for which they may be eligible.

However, refugees also met with discrimination from private landlords (as emphasised by service providers). Refugees also have specific cultural requirements for the style of their houses and can find the style of housing to be culturally unsuitable in plan.

Overcrowding is an issue for refugees. Compared to 2001 Census figures, they have twice the average number of people per bedroom than other New Zealanders. This was particularly so for the Quota refugees who tended to have large families.

Implications

English language courses need to be targeted for everyday use and tailored to the needs of the participants rather than operate a ‘one-size-fits-all approach’. Children who attend school, and refugees in employment working with English-speaking colleagues, find their English improves with daily use and friendly encouragement. This is perhaps the most promising mitigation.

In terms of housing, any issues of overcrowding need to be addressed. This, along with the need for culturally appropriate housing, could be brought to the attention of housing providers who may be able to take some of the concerns into account when allocating housing.

A basic requirement for refugees accessing English language classes, looking for or taking part in employment, and maintaining contact with community members, is access to transport. A number of participants said daily activities became easier once they had access to transport or obtained their driver’s licence. Assisting refugees to obtain a driver’s licence as part of their orientation to New Zealand would be beneficial. Alternatively, prioritising accommodation that is close to ethnic communities, work and training opportunities or transport routes is important.

A goal of the national Immigration Settlement Strategy is that refugees and migrants are able to use English in a New Zealand setting, or can access appropriate language support to bridge the gap. This initiative includes increased funding for ESOL provision in schools and tertiary institutions.

19.3.5 The provision of health services and children’s schooling are working well

Most participants were satisfied with the overall healthcare they had received for themselves and their children in New Zealand, with many referring to a good, very good or excellent service, and caring and kind staff. Most participants who had visited a hospital were aware of their entitlement to an interpreter and a number had used this service and were very satisfied. A reason participants gave for their health improving in New Zealand was access to good healthcare services and medical support. For the small number who had concerns relating to healthcare, the main difficulties reported were waiting lists and waiting times – something that causes

concern for many New Zealand citizens. Some of the other concerns regarding health, as discussed above, were due to cultural difference.

Another area where the majority of participants expressed satisfaction was with their children's schooling. Most participants said they had children between the ages of five and 17 years attending school, and only a small number reported that their children had experienced problems settling into school. Parents and teenagers said good and supportive teachers as well as extra assistance with English language learning were important in helping them adjust to school. Nearly all teenagers said they liked school.

Implications

Because participants were generally positive about healthcare and schooling, it is important to examine what makes these areas stand out. Both health and education are well-funded. Much of the support that Quota refugees received at Mangere Refugee Reception Centre (Mangere) is targeted at health and education. Resettled refugees are entitled to a Community Services Card which gives them free outpatient care at hospitals and maximum subsidy for primary care and prescriptions.

Community liaison and co-ordinator positions assist refugees with gaining access to health services in the community. The Ministry of Education funds a community liaison and co-ordinator service to support refugee children in their studies. The government provides supplementary funding to meet the needs of students from non-English speaking backgrounds. Initiatives such as having community liaison and co-ordinator positions could be extended to other areas to facilitate access to services.

19.3.6 Support agencies offer a very useful service

Many refugees were very positive about the people and organisations that provide support (such as the RMS and Mangere). In a focus group, Burmese refugees in Nelson stressed the importance of a dedicated person providing support and had found this assistance invaluable.

Implications

Convention and Family Reunion refugees would benefit from a similar orientation to New Zealand to that provided to Quota refugees on arrival, through Mangere. The DoL's Immigration Service funds the community sector and non-government organisations to provide orientation courses for Convention refugees and family members of refugees. These courses should be evaluated as to their effectiveness and, if required, expanded to meet demand.

In their own work, service providers lamented a lack of sufficient funding and their subsequent reliance on volunteers, who are highly appreciated but obviously mostly untrained and prone to 'burn-out'. Here it should be noted that the RMS has been provided with an additional \$6 million over four years to provide a range of settlement services to Quota refugees and also to around 300 family members of refugees per annum. Providers also hold networking opportunities in high regard, for example the six-weekly Refugee and Migrant Forum which is held in Christchurch.

20 OVERALL CONCLUSION

The journey towards resettlement is one that necessarily entails difficulty and provides refugees with many challenges along the way. Many refugees reported that it becomes easier to accomplish daily activities as time passes, and this is a positive endorsement of the work of the people and organisations that provide support.

This research was guided by the objectives set out in Section 2.4. There are many barriers to resettlement, some of which are due to unique issues that refugees from different cultures inevitably face when resettling into a very different country. It is easy to emphasise the issues and barriers, but it is also important to acknowledge the many successful support systems that are in place. Some of these systems may need improvement, but in many areas such as assistance with housing, or with schooling of children, there is a solid foundation to build on.

The research reinforces what is well known. Ability with English language is crucial to all aspects of resettlement and subsequently those with poorer English language ability need more help. The facilitation of English language learning, tailored to the needs of the individual, is vital. Being able to work is very important to refugee well-being. However, refugees face numerous barriers to entering the workforce and need much assistance with this process.

The teenagers and young people interviewed showed an enthusiasm for their role in New Zealand society, especially a desire to learn about and take part in the New Zealand way of life, coupled with a determination to maintain their home culture. They also had an appreciation of the opportunities available to them. Many of their parents looked to the younger generation to be the ones to succeed. Although older refugees may struggle more with language, employment and integration than their children, the overwhelming majority said they were satisfied with the services provided and they liked New Zealand's societal structures and the people here.

It is important to note that many of the issues raised in this research also face other New Zealanders. Hospital waiting lists, low incomes, and housing difficulties affect many who are not refugees, and mitigation in these cases will come from the development of policy in a broad range of areas. Discrimination too, is something that must be addressed more broadly as an issue facing all migrants. This research also highlighted issues for particular groups of refugees and these have been commented on in the preceding chapters.

The success of the programme run by the Mangere Refugee Reception Centre and the help provided by the RMS are all positive outcomes that can be further improved by the feedback provided in this report.

Most importantly, the research gives voice to refugees who, in the process of resettlement, can disappear into the community as other agencies and people speak on their behalf. By bringing together their positive and negative

impressions of resettlement, government and service providers can work towards improving services and developing policy to best support refugees on this journey.

The issues raised by this research will provide an important feed into the further development of the national Immigration Settlement Strategy and the initiatives that will need to be developed to address gaps in refugee service provision.

Additional research is needed to assist with further understanding issues that could only be touched on in this research. In particular, the following topics could be usefully explored in more depth than was possible in this project. Mental health issues need to be explored to more fully assess the impact they have on the resettlement process. Discrimination is also a difficult topic to investigate as it is often described from the viewpoint of the victim. There are also other viewpoints that need to be described, such as those of landlords and employers. Doing this would allow us to understand more of the dynamics of discrimination, which in some cases may be more due to misunderstandings or the impact of two cultures ‘talking past each other’.

Other areas for further research include particular issues faced by sub-groups of refugees, such as men and women, children and teenagers, and the aged. Many issues were raised in this research relating to each of these groups and researchers could investigate these further. Finally, given the range of problems that refugees face when trying to access employment, more research is required into successful employee/employer relationships to find out what makes them successful, and also into the barriers that are preventing refugees accessing the labour force.

07

APPENDICES

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APPENDIX 1: CRITERIA FOR BEING A REFUGEE

“Hello ... we are finding out about refugees in New Zealand, and are interested in people who do not have official refugee status, but who have had experiences that are similar to the people who have this status. Could I please ask you a few questions to see if you are eligible to be included in this study. Note that any responses you give are confidential, and will not be recorded or used for non-research purposes by the NZIS.”

(1) “Do you consider yourself or any of your dependants to have been refugees in the time before you came to New Zealand, even if you did not actually apply for, or did not get granted refugee status?”

IF ‘YES’, TICK BOX

(2) “In the time before you came to New Zealand, were you or your dependants ever:

- Classed by the UNHCR or the Red Cross or any similar agency as being a refugee;
- Been given ‘temporary protection’ by the UNHCR; or
- Been regarded as ‘people of concern’ by the UNHCR
- Received any aid, assistance, or protection from the UNHCR or the Red Cross, or any other similar agency?”

IF ‘YES’, TICK BOX

(3) “In the time before you came to New Zealand, were you or any of your dependants in a situation that threatened your lives or safety, be it:

- Systematic persecution of your particular social group;
- External or internal conflict;
- a serious disruption of public order; or
- the consequences of a natural disaster?”

IF ‘YES’ THEN ASK, “Did this situation lead to you or your dependants:

- being displaced from your usual place of residence,
- seeking and/or receiving humanitarian assistance of some kind to stay alive and healthy; or
- needing a new place to settle?”

IF ‘YES’ TO FOLLOW-UP QUESTION, TICK BOX

IF ANY OF THESE THREE TICK BOXES ARE TICKED THEN: “We would be very keen for you and [and your family] to take part in our study. This will involve...”

APPENDIX 2: CODE OF ETHICS

To ensure that the research is undertaken in an ethical manner, this paper addresses three components of the research:

1. An articulated code of ethics;
2. A discussion of the ethical issues in undertaking research with the refugee community; and
3. Informed consent and information sheets.

ETHICS FOR RESEARCH PROJECT: REFUGEE VOICES

The following code sets out the processes for ethical research. All those who are part of the research (including those employed by the Department of Labour as Researchers and research associates and those contracted as contract supervisors) will be required to comply with the code of ethics.

PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF CODE

The purpose of a Code of Ethics in research is to have a system of moral principles or rules of conduct for undertaking the research.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

The following principles will guide those responsible for undertaking the research:

- Informed consent free of coercion;
- Respect for rights of privacy and confidentiality and in particular, conformity with the Privacy Act 1993 and any Code issued under that Act;
- Minimisation of risk of harm to the subject;
- Limitation of deception;
- Social and cultural sensitivity;
- Research merit;
- Avoidance of conflict of interest;
- Respect for property rights;
- No discrimination which breaches the Human Rights Act 1993 or the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990; and
- Special care taken of vulnerable participants.

PRINCIPLES FOR COLLECTING AND USING DATA

The following principles will apply in relation to the collection and use of information from the participants:

- The purpose and objectives of the research project will be provided to the participants in their own language or the language that they nominate prior to any information collection so they fully understand the research;

- The participants will have an opportunity to be updated on the research throughout the process. Research findings will be conveyed in a form that participants can understand i.e. in their own languages;
- Participant names will remain confidential. If comments and quotes are used, these will be through a unique identifier such as ‘Person A’;
- The process of interviewing and reporting will be conducted so as to protect the research participants from retraumatisation;
- Information for the research will only be used for the research entitled ‘Refugee Voices’ and articles associated with it;
- Personal information will be handled in such a way that protects the confidentiality of the participants and ensures the safe custody of data. This includes safe storage of data and that at the end of the process, all information collected for this project will be deleted and destroyed.

GENERAL STATEMENT

Ethical procedures are an important part of Refugee Voices. As the research will be carried out in a cross-cultural context and with individuals who have been in difficult situations which may have caused trauma, it is particularly important to pay close attention to the way in which the research will be carried out. It is, therefore, important to put procedures in place to ensure that in circumstances where an interview raises trauma for participants, they are supported as part of this process. Refugees, as a group, are vulnerable and every effort will be made to ensure that this research is a positive experience in which they are able to tell their stories in a supportive environment.

INVITING PARTICIPATION

Refugees will be asked to participate in the research. Refugees will be informed of the purpose, objectives, techniques, procedures, limitations, potential risks and benefits of taking part in the research by research associates. They do not have to take part in the research. No coercion will be used to get them to participate. They will be informed of this. They will also have two weeks after they have been interviewed the first time in which they can withdraw from the research.

INFORMING AND RESPECTING THE REFUGEES

If they decide to participate in the research, refugees will all give informed consent to take part in the research. Informed consent will be either in written form in their own language or given orally. As stated above, if refugees do not want to participate, they do not have to give informed consent to take part. Informed consent ensures that:

1. They are given the choice to participate or not participate in the research;
2. They are aware of the likely consequences of participation – the questions and the amount of time required to take part in the research;
3. Information is given to them about the purposes of the research and the use that will be made of the ‘data’ that they give to researchers; and

4. Anyone interviewed under the age of 16 will require informed consent as well as the consent of a parent or guardian (a separate ethics form will be used for individuals under 16 years of age).

CONDUCTING THE INTERVIEW

In conducting the interviews, the research associates will need to respect the rights and dignity of the refugees that they are interviewing. The research associates will also not condone or engage in any discrimination based on age, colour, culture, disability, ethnic group, gender, race, religion, sexual orientation, marital status or socio-economic status.

Interviews will be carried out in best-practice circumstances. The training will ensure that research associates:

- do not force participants to answer any questions that they do not want to;
- ensure that participants feel comfortable and safe throughout the interview;
- maintain respect for the participants throughout the interview;
- are aware of their own experiences and potential subjectivity and avoid bringing this into the interview situation; and
- allow the participants to express their views in their own words.

This is the area where trauma may occur for the research participants and where there needs to be clear processes in place for interviewing refugees. Reactions to trauma vary considerably, ranging from relatively mild, creating minor disruptions in the person's life, to severe and debilitating. According to the International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies (sourced June 2001), it is very common for people to experience anxiety, fear, shock and upset, as well as emotional numbness and personal or social disconnection.

Recalling events from the past which are painful may lead to retraumatisation of research participants – this is acknowledged by the research design. However, refugees have been asked questions about their experiences a number of times meaning that there is as much likelihood that it will not occur. Another important issue to consider is the importance of the research in feeding into better resettlement policy for refugees. In order to put in place a better resettlement process, it is important that research be carried out on present experiences.

It is also important to be aware that the research may raise trauma for the research associates as well as the refugees and that a process needs to be put into place to ensure that they have access to counselling if required. This will be addressed in the training and the contract supervisors in each of the centres will provide support.

The literature has suggested a number of ways that the interview can be conducted to reduce harm. As such, all interviews will be conducted in a way that respects the participants and reduces harm to participants and research associates. To lessen the likelihood of trauma occurring, the following has been put into place:

- NZIS is employing research associates from the communities taking part in the research. This will ensure that there is an element of trust, familiarity and common cultural understanding between the researcher and the participants. The research associates will speak the same language as the participants.
- Research associates will be required to keep all information obtained as part of the research process confidential.
- The research will be carried out in best practice terms with the ideal of no harm occurring to either the researchers or participants. As such, research associates will be trained to deal with circumstances where their participants and their own personal safety are taken into account. A procedure is outlined in more detail below:
 - **Research associates will be employed who have empathy with the participants and have worked with refugee communities before;**
 - **At the first meeting, the research associates will go over the research in detail outlining the areas they will be talking about. This will ensure that interviewees are fully informed about the questions before the interview and will have had an opportunity to think about their participation;**
 - **The research associate will ensure that the interviewee feels comfortable and secure at the start and throughout the interview and is happy to answer questions;**
 - **If any questions are potentially upsetting, the interviewee does not have to answer them and can move on to the next questions;**
 - **If during a question, the interviewee starts to become upset during interviewing, the research associates will stop interviewing immediately and will be trained to provide support at this time;**
 - **The research associates will have undergone training to help the interviewees if they become distressed during the interview. This training will include calming the interviewee, talking through the issues that have been raised, discussing the next steps (continuing the interview, stopping the interview or contacting a counsellor);**
 - **If trauma does occur the access to a counsellor will be provided;**
 - **Any counsellor contracted by the NZIS will be experienced in working with refugees and trauma and will be able to offer their services within one month of the interview;**
 - **The counsellor will provide up to 3 hours service to the participants;**
 - **All information obtained by the counsellor will be confidential between the refugees and themselves;**
 - **Information on trauma counsellors will be provided to the research associates at training and to the interviewees during the interview;**
 - **If the research associates become traumatised by the interview procedures, they will have access to a contracted supervisor in their centre.**
- The research will be conducted in a place where the participants are comfortable;

- NZIS will be sensitive to cultural, gender and age needs of the participants when considering who will undertake the interview.
- To further alleviate possible trauma arising, the research team is considering the use of NZIS administrative files to provide background to the research on how the refugees came to be in their present situation. This information will be confidential to the research team, but will also mean these types of questions can be avoided in the interview, with the focus being only on the current situation.
- Research associates will also have an opportunity to de-brief after the interviews to ensure their care and safety.
- Refugees acknowledged as already being particularly vulnerable to re-traumatisation by service agencies will be excluded from the research.

RECORDING INFORMATION

Information will be recorded by the research associates and will be kept confidential to the research team. The research associates will store tape recorded interviews securely so that no one else has access to them.

APPENDIX 3: DEMOGRAPHICS

The main demographic information is set out in the body of the report. This section provides some additional demographic data about participants.

RECENTLY ARRIVED REFUGEES

Location in New Zealand

Table A.3.1 Location of *recently arrived* refugees at six months by urban region

Urban region	Refugee type							
	Quota		Convention		Family Reunion		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Auckland	35	36	39	93	54	76	128	61
Hamilton	13	14	0	0	0	0	13	6
Wellington	25	26	1	2	16	23	42	20
Christchurch	23	24	2	5	1	1	26	12
Total	96	100	42	100	71	100	209	100

Marital status

Fifty-seven percent of *recently arrived* refugees were married and 32 percent had never been married or were single (see Table A.3.2). More Quota refugees were single or had never married as they often came to New Zealand as family groups with children. A higher proportion of Convention and Family Reunion refugees were married than Quota refugees. A small number of people were divorced or separated (mostly Quota refugees).

Table A.3.2 Marital status of *recently arrived* refugees at six months

Marital status	Refugee type			
	Quota	Convention	Family Reunion	Total
	%	%	%	%
Married	43	71	68	57
Never married/single	44	26	20	32
Widowed	5	2	11	7
Divorced	5	0	0	2
Separated	3	0	1	2
Total percent	100	100	100	100
Total number	94	42	71	207

Note

1. Two did not respond.

Countries participants came from

Most participants were born in the country that they considered they came from. In a few cases, some were not (these were mostly Iranian children and teenagers who were born in refugee camps in Iraq).

Recently arrived refugees were asked about the country they last lived in for 12 months or more. Most had spent time in country other than the one they

considered they came from. For example, most Burmese had spent this time in Thailand, Somalis had spent time in Ethiopia and Kenya and some Iraqis had spent time in Jordan and Syria. A number named New Zealand as the last country they had spent 12 months. This was the case for most of the Convention refugees and some of the Family Reunion refugees.

Table A.3.3 shows when participants left the country they considered they came from. Sixteen percent left their home country before 1991 and most of these individuals were Quota refugees. The majority of Convention and Family Reunion refugees left their home countries between 1991 and 2001.

Table A.3.3 When recently arrived refugees left the country they considered they came from

Year left home country	Refugee type							
	Quota		Convention		Family Reunion		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Never lived in country	6	6	0	0	0	0	6	3
1970 to 1980	17	18	0	0	1	1	18	9
1981 to 1990	13	14	0	0	2	3	15	7
1991 to 2000	47	49	38	95	56	80	141	69
2001	12	13	2	5	11	16	25	12
Total	95	100	40	100	70	100	205	100

Note

1. Two did not know and two did not respond.

Ethnicity

Participants were asked what ethnic group or groups they belonged to. They were able to specify as many ethnic groups as they considered they belonged to. Three quarters gave only one ethnic group with the rest specifying more than one ethnicity. Table A.3.4 shows that those who come from Iran, Iraq and Burma felt that they belonged to a wider range of ethnic groups. Those who came from Sri Lanka, Ethiopia, Somalia and Afghanistan generally specified only one ethnic group.

Table A.3.4 Ethnic groups specified by recently arrived refugees

Main ethnic group	Other ethnic group identified	Other ethnic group identified	One identified	Two identified	Three identified
Afghan only			14		
	Afghan and Arab			1	
Kurdish only			10		
	Kurdish and Iraqi			1	
		Kurdish, Iraqi and Arab			1
	Kurdish and Iranian			7	
		Kurdish, Iranian and Persian			3
Iranian only			10		
	Iranian and Persian			4	
	Iranian and Turkish			1	
Arab only			7		
	Arab and Iraqi			7	
Assyrian only			27		
	Assyrian and Iraqi			14	
Burmese only			3		
	Burmese and Karen			4	
		Burmese, Karen and Thai			1
	Burmese and Shan			4	
	Burmese and Mon			2	
Khaldani only			5		
	Chaldean and Iraqi			1	
	Chaldean and Arab			1	
Ethiopian only			15		
Oromo only			3		
Somali only			28		
Tamil only			32		
Other			5		
Total			157	47	5

Note

1. There were five ethnicities identified by one participant each. These were merged into larger groupings to protect the identity of participants.
2. Participants could give multiple responses.

Nearly all participants specified they had a religion, with only 1 percent specifying no religion (see Table A.3.5). The largest religious group was Islam (44 percent) followed by Christianity (including Orthodox Christian) at 38 percent. There were noticeable differences between refugee groups. The Family Reunion refugees interviewed were mostly Christian, with 69 percent stating this to be their religion. Quota refugees interviewed mainly practised Islam. It is worth noting however, that depending on where in the world refugees come from, the religious background of refugees will differ markedly from year to year, and also depend on whether it is people with minority or majority religions who are being persecuted in their country.

Table A.3.5 Religion of recently arrived refugees at six months

Religion	Refugee type			
	Quota	Convention	Family Reunion	Total
	%	%	%	%
Buddhist	11	2	2	7
Christian	5	24	69	31
Orthodox Christian	13	0	1	7
Hindu	0	38	8	11
Islam	70	31	17	44
No religion	0	5	1	1
Total number	96	42	71	209

ESTABLISHED REFUGEES**Marriage**

Forty-seven percent of *established* refugees were married and 31 percent were single or had never married. Nineteen percent were separated or divorced, while 3 percent were widowed (see Table A.3.6).

Table A.3.6 Marital status of established refugees

Marital status	Total n	Total %
Married	88	47
Never married/single	58	31
Separated	24	13
Divorced	11	6
Widowed	5	3
De facto	3	2
Total	189	100

Countries participants came from

Established refugees were asked about the country they last lived in before coming to New Zealand. A number said they had spent time in a country that differed from the country they considered they came from. This was particularly the case for Ethiopian participants who had often spent time in Sudan before coming to New Zealand.

Sixty-eight percent of *established* refugees left the country they came from between 1991 and 2000. Thirty percent left their former country between 1981 and 1990 (see Table A.3.7).

Table A.3.7 When *established* refugees left the country they considered they came from

Year left home country	Total n	Total %
1976 to 1980	3	2
1981 to 1990	55	30
1991 to 2000	126	68
Total	184	100

Note

1. Four did not know and one did not respond.

Ethnicity

Table A.3.8 shows the ethnicities *established* refugees identified with. Of the 189 participants, 176 identified with one ethnicity and 17 identified with two ethnicities.

Table A.3.8 Ethnic groups identified by *established* refugees

Main ethnic group	Other ethnic group identified	One identified n	Two identified n
Arab only		3	
	Arab and Iraqi		1
	Arab and Somali		1
Assyrian only		24	
	Assyrian and Iraqi		10
	Assyrian and Chaldean		1
Eritrean only		1	
Ethiopian only		38	
	Ethiopian and Oromo		1
	Ethiopian and Amaharic		1
Iranian only		4	
Iraqi only		1	
	Iraqi and Chaldean		1
Kurdish only		32	
Somali only		42	
	Somali and Afro-Arab		1
Sri Lankan Tamil only		12	
Vietnamese only		12	
Other		3	
Total		172	17

Note

1. Participants could give multiple responses.

Nearly all of the *established* refugee group identified with a religion (see Table A.3.9). The largest religious groups for the *established refugees* was Christian (including Orthodox Christian) at 48 percent and Islam at 44 percent. A smaller proportion were Hindu and Buddhist. The religions are a reflection of the countries participants have come from.

Table A.3.9 Religion of established refugees

Religion	Total %
Buddhist	2
Christian	47
Hindu	6
Islam	44
Orthodox Christian	1
No religion	1
Total	186

Note

1. Three did not respond.

APPENDIX 4: ADDITIONAL DATA TABLES

RECENTLY ARRIVED REFUGEES WHO DID NOT TAKE PART IN THE SECOND WAVE OF INTERVIEWS

Forty-seven *recently arrived* refugees who were interviewed at six months did not take part in the second wave of interviews (see Table A.4.1). Nineteen Quota refugees did not take part, most of whom were originally interviewed in Wellington. Eighteen Family Reunion refugees did not take part, and most of this group were originally interviewed in Auckland. Overall, sixteen were from Iraq, eight were from Iran, eight were from Somalia, and six were from Ethiopia. A smaller number were from Sri Lanka and Afghanistan.

Table A.4.1 *Recently arrived* refugees who did not take part in second wave of interviews by urban region

Urban region	Refugee type			
	Quota	Convention	Family Reunion	Total
	n	n	n	n
Auckland	1	8	14	23
Hamilton	2	0	0	2
Wellington	11	0	3	14
Christchurch	5	2	1	8
Total	19	10	18	47

Note

1. Relates to urban region where participants were interviewed at six months.

Table A.4.2 Language skills of recently arrived refugees at six months

Number of languages	Refugee Type					
	Quota		Convention		Family Reunion	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Speak						
0 languages	0	0	0	0	0	0
1 language	45	47	16	38	8	11
2 languages	22	23	15	36	37	52
3 or more languages	29	30	11	26	26	37
Read						
0 languages	16	17	0	0	4	6
1 language	51	53	16	38	32	46
2 languages	17	18	22	52	25	36
3 or more languages	12	13	4	10	9	13
Write						
0 languages	16	17	0	0	5	7
1 language	62	65	22	52	42	61
2 languages	10	10	20	48	19	28
3 or more languages	8	8	0	0	3	4

Note

1. One did not know what languages they could read well and two did know what languages they could write well.

Table A.4.3 Individuals or organisations recently arrived refugees at six months received help from to find their current housing

Who help was received from	Refugee type		
	Quota	Convention	Family Reunion
	n	n	n
RMS	41	0	0
Central (HNZC)	25	1	2
Local	0	0	1
Sponsors	26	0	12
Community	0	2	1
Religious	0	1	1
Family	10	1	17
Friends	5	7	12
Employers	0	0	0
Real estate	0	1	3
Other	1	0	0
Total	52	13	32

Table A.4.4 Amount of weekly rent paid by household size

Amount of rent paid \$	Household size				
	1 person	2 to 4 people	5 to 7 people	8 or more people	Total
	n	n	n	n	n
Recently arrived (six months)					
0 to 100	8	30	16	1	55
101 to 200	3	21	8	1	33
201 to 300	0	21	15	4	40
Over 300	0	1	6	0	7
Total number	11	73	45	6	135
Established					
0 to 100	10	21	10	6	46
101 to 200	1	18	3	3	26
201 to 300	1	14	15	5	34
Over 300	0	1	5	2	9
Total number	12	54	33	16	115

Note

1. Four *recently arrived* refugees did not know. Two *established* refugees did not respond.

Table A.4.5 Amount of rent paid by region

Amount of rent paid \$	Household size				
	Auckland	Hamilton	Wellington	Christchurch	Total
	n	n	n	n	n
Recently arrived (six months)					
0 to 100	27	2	18	8	55
101 to 200	23	2	4	4	33
201 to 300	29	2	6	3	40
Over 300	5	0	2	0	7
Total number	84	6	30	15	135
Established					
0 to 100	26	1	15	4	46
101 to 200	8	3	8	8	27
201 to 300	31	1	2	0	34
Over 300	7	0	1	0	8
Total number	72	5	26	12	115

Note

1. Four *recently arrived* refugees did not know. Two *established* refugees did not respond.

Table A.4.6 Whether *recently arrived* refugees at six months would have liked more help with their settlement

More help or information needed	Refugee type							
	Quota		Convention		Family Reunion		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Yes	51	54	19	46	25	35	95	46
No	42	44	20	49	35	49	97	47
Don't know	2	2	2	5	11	15	15	7
Total	95	100	41	100	71	100	207	100

Note

- Two did not respond. Those who did not know are included in the table.

Table A.4.7 Whether *recently arrived* refugees felt particular services were more useful than others

Particular services more useful	Refugee type							
	Quota		Convention		Family Reunion		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
6 months								
Yes	36	38	22	54	13	18	71	34
No	56	59	15	37	44	62	115	56
Don't know	3	3	4	10	14	20	21	10
Total	95	100	41	100	71	100	207	100
2 years								
Yes	24	32	11	34	10	19	45	28
No	49	65	21	66	42	81	112	70
Don't know	2	3	0	0	0	0	2	1
Total	75	100	32	100	52	100	159	100

Note

- At six months, two did not respond. At two years, three did not respond. Those who did not know are included in the table.

Table A.4.8 shows the number of dependent children with whom participants lived. Of the *recently arrived* refugees, more Quota refugees than other participants had dependent children and they tended to have greater numbers of children. *Established* refugees had similar numbers of dependent children as *recently arrived* Quota refugees.

Table A.4.8 Number of dependent children participants lived with

Number of dependent children	Refugee type									
	Recently arrived								Established	
	Quota		Convention		Family Reunion		Total		n	%
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
1	12	27	7	47	10	37	29	34	22	22
2	9	20	4	27	8	30	21	24	34	34
3	6	14	2	13	7	26	15	17	11	11
4	7	16	2	13	0	0	9	10	12	12
5	4	9	0	0	2	7	6	7	8	8
6	2	5	0	0	0	0	2	2	7	7
7	3	7	0	0	0	0	3	3	1	1
8	1	2	0	0	0	0	1	1	3	3
9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Total	44	100	15	100	27	100	86	100	99	100

Table A.4.9 Whether participants had family members in New Zealand outside of their household

Other family members in NZ	Refugee type				
	Recently arrived				Established
	Quota	Convention	Family Reunion	Total	
	%	%	%	%	%
Yes	56	21	77	56	67
No	44	79	23	44	33
Total percent	100	100	100	100	100
Total number	96	42	69	207	187

Note

1. Of the *recently arrived* refugees, two did not respond. Of the *established* refugees, two did not know.

At six months, a smaller proportion of Convention refugees (34 percent) said they were unable to sponsor family than Quota (61 percent) or Family Reunion refugees (72 percent). When interviewed again at two years, around half of Quota and Convention refugees said they were unable to sponsor family to New Zealand, compared to three quarters of Family Reunion refugees.

Table A.4.10 Whether *recently arrived* refugees would like to sponsor family members but were unable to do so

Unable to sponsor family members	Refugee type							
	Quota		Convention		Family Reunion		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
6 months								
Yes	57	61	14	34	49	72	120	59
No	37	39	27	66	19	28	83	41
Total percent	94	100	41	100	68	100	203	100
2 years								
Yes	33	49	14	50	38	73	85	57
No	35	51	14	50	14	27	63	43
Total percent	68	100	28	100	52	100	148	100

Note

- At six months, four people did not know and two did not respond. At two years, eleven people did not know and three did not respond.

Table A.4.11 Ability of *recently arrived* refugees interviewed at two years to speak English by age group

Spoken English ability	Age group		
	Under 25 years	25 to 39 years	40 years and over
	%	%	%
Very well	23	22	4
Well	34	26	22
Fairly well	18	26	31
Not very well	20	20	10
No more than a few words or phrases	5	6	33
None	0	0	2
Total percent	100	100	100
Total number	44	65	51

Note

- One did not know and one did not respond.

Table A.4.12 Ability of *established* refugees to speak English by age group

Spoken English ability	Age group		
	Under 25 years	25 to 39 years	40 years and over
	%	%	%
Very well	39	13	11
Well	37	31	21
Fairly well	13	26	30
Not very well	9	23	25
No more than a few words or phrases	2	6	11
None	0	0	4
Total percent	100	100	100
Total number	54	77	57

Note

- One did not know.

Table A.4.13 How comfortable participants felt carrying out daily activities in New Zealand

How comfortable carrying out daily activities	Refugee type									
	<i>Recently arrived (2 years)</i>								<i>Established</i>	
	Quota		Convention		Family Reunion		Total		n	%
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%		
Very comfortable	29	38	10	31	21	40	60	37	72	39
Comfortable	38	50	18	56	22	42	78	48	99	54
Neither comfortable or uncomfortable	6	8	1	3	7	13	14	9	8	4
Not very comfortable	2	3	3	9	3	6	8	5	3	2
Not at all comfortable	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	2	1
Total	76	100	32	100	53	100	161	100	184	100

Note

1. Of the *recently arrived* refugees at two years, one did not respond. Of the *established* refugees, five did not know.

08 | BIBLIOGRAPHY



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