

Youth Speaks SNAPSHOT 2023

Coming to Australia as a refugee or migrant is a unique experience for young people. They are navigating the challenges of a new language, country and culture, while also dealing with the complexities of adolescence and the transition into adulthood. As part of the Youth Speaks project, we consulted over 100 young refugees and migrants to learn about their experiences settling in Australia. Here's what they said.

Young refugees and migrants are resilient and hopeful. They look forward to finding a job, completing their education and achieving their dreams. They expressed huge gratitude for being in a country that is safe, stable and where there is opportunity. Where they did identify challenges, young people also spoke up with ideas to maximise the strengths of young refugees and migrants.

Challenge 1

Young people are learning English, while also trying to support family members with limited English skills to navigate the Australian system.

Opportunity:

- Greater access to digital settlement information would help the digital generation become more independent and ease their burden of responsibility. A digital one-stop-shop that centralises settlement resources and supports engagement with case managers would allow young people to access information and resources in a way that is easy and familiar to them.

Challenge 2

Young people are in a landscape that is vastly different to the one they are used to and grappling with a new culture and way of thinking and being.

Opportunity:

- Fostering more youth-led cultural exchange programs between newly arrived young people and their Australian-born counterparts would reduce culture shock and provide opportunities for strengthening English language skills.

Challenge 3

Young people are adapting to a new country, sometimes with little to no support from friends, family and the wider community.

Opportunity

- Establishing mentoring/buddy systems and peer networks in schools and universities would improve inclusion and acceptance for young people, while also reducing bullying and discrimination.

Challenge 4

Young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds aspire to become leaders in their field, to gain meaningful employment and to give back to the community - but many of them don't know where to start.

Opportunity:

- Working with employers to create tailored leadership development and internship programs would give young refugees and migrants a foot in the door.
- Extending funding for existing programs for young migrants and refugees, such as Youth Transition Support, would also ensure a greater level of support for young people.

Challenge 5

Settlement programs are designed to consider the needs of families as a whole, rather than considering the individualised support young people need to adapt to their new environment. In addition, visa status can lock young people out of receiving mainstream support.

Opportunity:

- Increase funding for settlement services and youth case management that considers the needs and strengths of children and young people.
- Removing visa eligibility criteria for mainstream youth services in areas such as housing would also ensure greater support for young people.

In their own words

"When it comes to dreams, I cannot help but think of getting a place to call home. We have never had a place we called home. So, for us to have that, it would definitely be a dream come true."

"I have had to learn to advocate for myself, learn different independent skills than what was required of me in Afghanistan."

"I wish to become a doctor and serve the people to help people and repay the kindness I have been shown."

"I think the biggest thing is maintaining our own cultural and religious beliefs as well. We're surrounded by so many types of people and so much more temptation with 100% more freedom, so it's definitely hard not to fall for those temptations."

"I don't know what I want to be yet in the future, I think I'm too worried about the now to think of that."

"I hope to find myself, to work out who I am and my identity. I'm trying to be better. I want to try new things so that when I have children, I can teach them about life's challenges."

"There's a sense of peace and tranquillity here. There is a different type of freedom, especially for females. We have rights and [are] not oppressed."

About Youth Speaks:

The Youth Speaks project is a collaboration between the NSW Settlement Partnership—a consortium of 20 settlement and community organisations led by non-profit SSI that delivers services to migrants and refugees—and the Youth Collective. Youth Collective is an SSI initiative that creates opportunities to support and empower young people from multicultural, migrant and refugee backgrounds.



**NSW
Settlement
Partnership**

The NSW Settlement Partnership (NSP) is a consortium of community organisations, led by SSI, and funded by the Department of Home Affairs ● nsp@ssi.org.au ● nsp.ssi.org.au