



# Ready to work

Experiences of people from diverse backgrounds looking for employment

**MAX SOLUTIONS**  
Employment . Support . Community  
Every person. Every chance.



# Acknowledgement of country

In keeping with MAX and HOST's shared commitment to reconciliation and respect, we acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land where we deliver our services and recognise that this land has always been under their custodianship. We pay our respect to Elders and emerging community leaders.

# Foreword



**Deborah Homewood**

*Managing Director,  
MAX Solutions*

## People are often asked the question 'where are you from?'

It's a question that is asked in a variety of contexts and for different purposes. We make assumptions based on people's place of origin, or where their family are from, which are further informed by our own views or experiences of those cultures.

The answer to that relatively simple question can carry significant potential disadvantage. The value of previous workforce experience, recognition of their skills, the right to work and visa conditions are all likely to be different depending on the answer. The expectations, hopes, and ambitions of an individual as well as their own personal circumstances may all be different too of course.

Even though Australia has a strong history of multiculturalism and migration, the complexity of ensuring people are able to participate fully in society persists. Not just for new arrivals, the cultural context and experiences of the children of migrants is also complicated and different from their parents and grandparents.



**David Keegan**

*Chief Executive Officer,  
HOST International*

**Despite the availability and diversity of jobs in Australia, CALD communities still consistently struggle to secure employment of choice; navigate access to accurate information; and negotiate the labour market. A lack of social networks can also make finding work very difficult for newcomers.**

When we add the dimension of cultural bias and the absence of local work experience and qualifications to the mix, it is no surprise that securing employment in a new country comes with real challenges. However, the services that are designed to support job seekers to overcome these barriers are not always fit for purpose or adequately equipped to assist newcomers to our country.

CALD job seekers are also varied with many types of backgrounds, skills and experiences before arriving in Australia. Some have planned to come here and some have not. The variation in experiences of different people and communities means that to solve the issues we must listen to the experiences, humanise the issues, and adjust services to meet needs.

This collaboration between HOST and MAX aims to provide an opportunity to listen and to consider what adjustments are needed to ensure that services can best facilitate timely and meaningful employment outcomes for CALD job seekers.

**MAX Solutions** is Australia's largest employment services provider. As of January 2022, MAX is supporting approximately 118,000 jobseekers into employment – including more than 24,000 people from CALD backgrounds.

**HOST International** is a not-for-profit that facilitates individual wellbeing and community inclusion for CALD people, and advocates for innovative global change regarding refugee and migrant protection.

# Executive summary

Modern-day Australia has welcomed roughly 190,000 migrants each year from across the globe. Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data show that there are more than 7.6 million migrants living in the country today and, at present, almost 30 percent of the population was born overseas – the highest percentage in almost 130 years.

But despite this unprecedented social integration, this report has found that more than 68% of jobseekers from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds say they have waited, or anticipate waiting, one year or more to find sustainable employment in Australia. The vast majority of these people (75%) admitted that they expect to wait up to three years to secure their desired job.

By comparison, 72% of overall Australian jobseekers find work within six months of looking, according to the ABS.

This considerable gap in employment outcomes is concerning, given that the need for reliable, long-term employment is one of the essential elements identified to help people from culturally diverse backgrounds settle successfully in Australia.

As Australia's largest employment services provider, MAX Solutions is well-positioned to tap into the workforce pool to gather greater insight into the challenges faced by CALD jobseekers in Australia. By partnering with HOST International, both parties have invested resources to discover how they can better offer services to aid CALD jobseekers.

The impacts of unemployment and prolonged job-seeking are well known, including detrimental impacts to mental health and strain placed on family dynamics. Understandably, these impacts have been found to be magnified by the pressures of settling in a new country.

While some CALD jobseekers may require additional training and support before entering the Australian workforce, many have existing professional skills that can be adapted to sectors within their new country with very little effort.

The lack of language skills has been identified as one of the barriers to employment for CALD people; however, feedback from workers and employers suggests that CALD jobseekers learn English faster once in the workforce, including learning and understanding industry specific terminology.

Indeed, despite 65% of CALD jobseekers surveyed for this report saying they were confident both speaking and writing in English, 51.5% said they found it hard or very hard overall to find employment – only 13.8% said it was easy or very easy.

A Migration Council of Australia Economic Impact of Migration report found that, with Australia's population projected to hit 38 million by 2050, based on current trends, migration is expected to contribute \$1.6 trillion to Australia's gross domestic product (GDP) by the middle of the century.

Clearly, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds have a role to play in the future of the nation – this report uncovers some of the issues this section of society experiences and how we might do better at helping them unlock their potential.

## Eduardo Donoso

Chairperson, Latin American Society of South Australia (LASSA)

*"A sustainable job is the most important thing for a human being. A good engineer, a good doctor, a good plumber, a good carpenter – they're going to be productive, regardless of where they've come from or where they're living."*

## Carla Zafiriadis

Employment Manager, Multicultural Australia

*"Migrants and refugees might have great skills and experiences; they want to work, but getting that first job in Australia is not always easy. Job seeking can be stressful, especially in a new environment where you don't know anyone and no one knows you. That first job in Australia is really important as it provides the much-needed Australian work experience, as well as a reference to put on the resume. It is also a way of practicing the English language and increasing confidence."*

# Our approach

The intent of this white paper is to provide insight, and add to the cross-sector conversation, regarding employment for people from CALD backgrounds. The authors note that previous reports have been written on this issue; however, we feel that the ongoing dialogue on the subject needs to be broadened to affect real change. It is our aim to understand the experiences of people from CALD backgrounds and recommend clear pathways forward.

## Customer survey research

In late November 2021, MAX and HOST distributed a 39-question survey to CALD people on our collective databases via text message. The survey asked respondents questions about moving to, and/or living in, Australia, as well as each individual's experience seeking and/or finding employment in the country. We had 442 respondents from different demographics respond to the survey over a five-day period.

## Roundtable discussions

In addition, the two organisations convened a series of three co-hosted digital roundtables on 1–2 December 2021. The purpose of these roundtables was to encourage discussion on the topic of employment for people from CALD backgrounds. The sessions were attended by more than 20 CALD jobseekers, as well as representatives from advocacy groups, educational institutions, government departments, and other interested parties. All three sessions were recorded, and the contributions of roundtable attendees informed the final outcome of this report.

## Differing views

Over the course of compiling this research, the authors found that, while survey and roundtable participants generally agreed on the key themes outlined in this report, different perspectives, backgrounds, and lived experience meant that opinions differed among people from CALD backgrounds.

## Key themes

Feedback from the customer survey and roundtable discussion informed the key themes outlined in this report.

# Who are the CALD population?

**'Culturally and linguistically diverse' (CALD) is a broad term and, depending on its use, may be used to reference a number of different segments of people within the community.**

The Australian Government states that 'CALD' is often used to describe people living in Australia who were born overseas – or people living in Australia who have parent/s or grandparent/s born overseas – and who are predominately from non-English speaking or non-Western countries.

For the purposes of this report, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds will be defined as individuals from the following groups.

## **Migrants from non-English speaking countries**

This group can be broken down further by countries of origin. There is a hierarchy and scale of migration, which means some countries have a higher rate of migration to Australia. The variation in this group, and their experience in settling in Australia, is very broad.

Migrants may not necessarily be culturally tied to their country of origin; however, a large number will be. These people are likely to experience language barriers. Decisions to immigrate to Australia may be related to partners or family, study, economic migration in the form of skilled workers or through travel and extended periods in the country.

## **Migrants from English speaking countries**

This group can still be culturally and linguistically diverse, but it is comprised of people who had previous residence in an English-speaking country.

Consequently, migrants in this group are more likely to have English language skills. Decisions to move may be related to partners or family, as well as economic migration in the form of skilled workers, or through travel and extended visitation periods in Australia.

## **Asylum seekers**

This group is occupied by people migrating looking for protection, because they fear persecution and/or have experienced violence or human rights violations. They are likely to apply for refugee status. This group likely carries the most risk of complications in terms of trauma, gaps in career, visa limitations, and settlement difficulties.

## **Humanitarian entrants**

These are people who have fled their country of origin and are unable or unwilling to return because of a fear of persecution. This group likely carries a high risk of complications in terms of long-term, ongoing trauma, visa limitations and long settlement timelines.

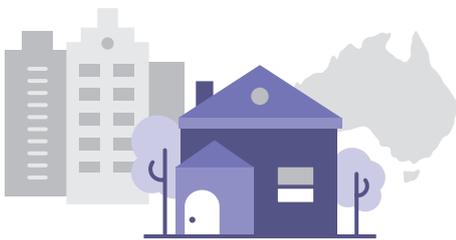


## The CALD contributors to this report

More than 440 CALD customers contributed to this report by providing feedback about their experiences seeking, and finding, employment in Australia. A demographic overview of these survey respondents is as follows:

**75%** live in a metropolitan area

**87%** have lived in Australia for more than five years



**2.9 people** is the average household among respondents

*Note: the average household size in Australia overall is 2.53, close to the OECD average of 2.63*



**69%** have children

**54%** are female

**33%** have their parents living with them



**40%** said they send/intend to send part of their income overseas

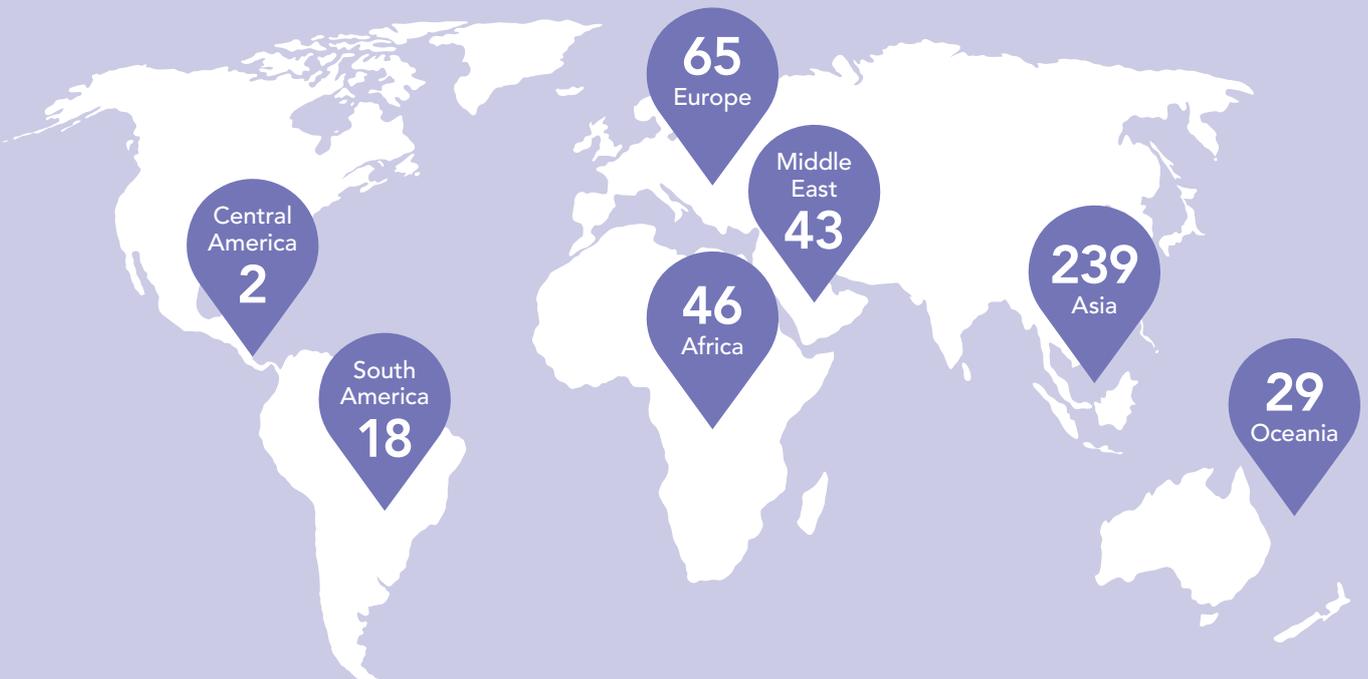


**12%** identify as a person with a disability



**4%** identify as LGBTIQ

They come from the following regions: CALD jobseekers continent of origin



# Key themes

## 1. Importance of employment for integrating into Australian society

There is an overwhelming consensus among CALD jobseekers, migrant advocates, and business groups that finding long-term, sustainable employment is critical to helping migrants from CALD backgrounds integrate into Australian society permanently.

Securing permanent employment significantly increases a CALD migrant's ability to establish a life for themselves, and their families, by offering them ongoing job security and financial independence.

By contrast, it has been found that short-term employment or insecure work – resulting in inconsistent income – can interrupt education or settlement processes for individuals and can create uncertainty and emotional unrest within a family.

Even still, a survey of MAX CALD customers found that more than 83% of employed respondents are currently still working in part-time or casual roles.

51.5% of respondents said they found it hard or very hard overall to find employment in general.

In addition, a 2018 University of Melbourne report found that young people from multicultural backgrounds are more likely to experience underemployment when compared to their English-speaking peers – 50% for multicultural youth versus 31% of young adults (aged 15–24).

Employment improves wellbeing; helps establish a sense of belonging; builds social connections; reduces welfare dependency; and improves English skills.

Incredibly, despite the need to find employment, more than **two in three** CALD jobseekers surveyed for this report said they have waited, or anticipate waiting, one year or more to find sustainable employment in Australia.

## 2. Value of relevant skills and experience

Before the closure of international borders in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, skilled migrants accounted for roughly two-thirds of people moving to Australia every year.

Over the last 10 years, up to 125,000 skilled migrants entered the country in search of employment each year. Though, despite their pre-existing skillsets, almost half of these people often fail to find employment in their chosen sector.

This report found that only 20% of CALD migrant jobseekers said they were sure their qualifications were recognised by their employer. This is despite 51% of customers also completing industry relevant training since arriving in Australia.

The need for prospective employers to recognise prior skills, obtained outside Australia, was identified as being important for skilled CALD jobseekers to gain employment in their new country. Unfortunately, many CALD jobseekers indicated that local employers stipulated that local experience in the relevant Australian sector was more important than even locally acquired accreditation.

Consequently, many skilled migrant jobseekers find themselves pushed into unskilled roles out of a necessity to earn a wage.

It is clear that locally recognised skills, qualifications, and work experience are critical to securing work in Australia.

### 3. Learning language vs gaining employment

English proficiency has been found to be another of the key determining factors contributing to migrants from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds successfully finding work in Australia.

The need to secure stable employment, however, can mean that time allocated to building English language skills often comes secondary to finding, and keeping, a job.

Migrants may also congregate together for support in their new country, English is sometimes used as a second language within migrant populations. Refugee and humanitarian entrants, for example, can enter Australia with limited-to-no English and can take years to become proficient.

Indeed, 44% of CALD customers said they never or rarely use English at home – or only on occasions when people from outside the family were present. As a consequence, these jobseekers may find that employment opportunities for them are limited.

65% of MAX and HOST customers said they are confident speaking and writing in English, but 47% admitted their English skills still needed improvement before they start work in Australia. An individual's confidence and the actual language competency required for employment may not always be aligned.

Language skills and work experience need to be complimentary, and more flexibility is needed for on-the-job language skills building.

#### Myriam Bahari

Community Engagement Coordinator,  
TAFE New South Wales

*“ There is pressure to get people in to work. People at times are pushed out of language programs and in to work. People don't return to their study, get lower end jobs and then lose their potential to be who they could be. ”*

### 4. Information and advice availability

It is generally accepted that some information and advice exists for CALD jobseekers and other migrants – resources are available through government departments, not-for-profit groups, and private organisations.

#### Finding information

The task of navigating the vast library of information, and finding advice relevant to the individual, is often a daunting task for CALD jobseekers. Concerningly, 74% said it was difficult to find the right information and/or support services to help them get a job.

#### Finding training

39% of customers said they found it easy or very easy to find training options, while another 36% found the task only moderately difficult. Only 25% of respondents admitted they struggled to find information relevant to them regarding training. Access to information is critical to helping people from CALD backgrounds navigate employment and training pathways.

Access to information is critical to helping people from CALD backgrounds navigate employment and training pathways.

## 5. Additional factors influencing employment

A number of additional variables influence the ability of CALD jobseekers to find employment.

These can be largely dependent on an individual's circumstances, but may include factors like visa status; employer commitment to workplace diversity; opportunity for CALD workers specifically; and cultural differences.

The fact that many CALD migrant jobseekers have no, or few, existing professional contacts/networks in Australia when they arrive makes it all the more difficult for these people to find suitable jobs as they become available.



# Importance of employment for integrating into Australian society

**For many migrants, the decision to move to Australia means a chance at a new life and an opportunity to seek a better standard of living.**

The ease of transition to life in Australia, however, is often largely determined by an individual's ability to find sustainable employment as quickly as possible.

Feedback received in our CALD December 2021 roundtables continually reinforced that securing long-term work significantly increases a migrant's ability to establish themselves without the need for outside assistance – this is particularly relevant in larger cities, where job opportunities are more diverse, but cost of living expenses are the highest.

According to the ABS, it is capital cities where migrant populations tend to settle. Approximately 63% of skilled migrants are settling in Australia's major metropolitan centres, according to the 2016 census.

Indeed, an overwhelming 75% of CALD customers surveyed were living in metropolitan areas, including CBDs and suburban areas. 60% of these customers indicated that they were still seeking employment.

Concerningly though, more than 83% of CALD customers who are currently working are in part-time or casual roles, despite two-thirds being willing and available to work in full-time roles up to 38 hours per week.

More than half of CALD customers said they found it hard or very hard overall to find employment; only 13.8% said they found it easy or very easy to get a job.

Despite the need to find an ongoing job, 68% of CALD jobseekers say they have waited, or anticipate waiting, one year or more to find sustainable employment in Australia.

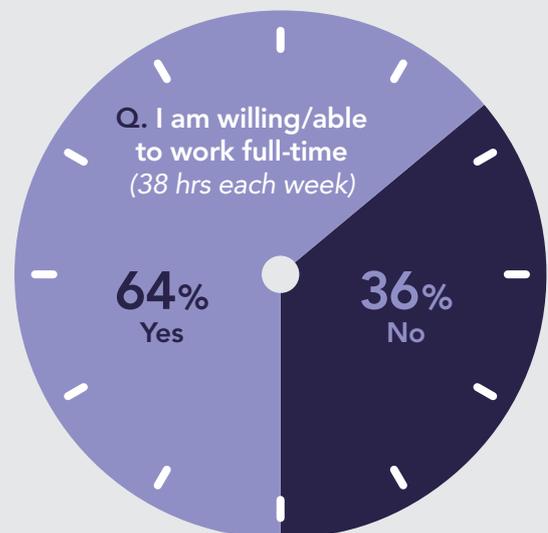
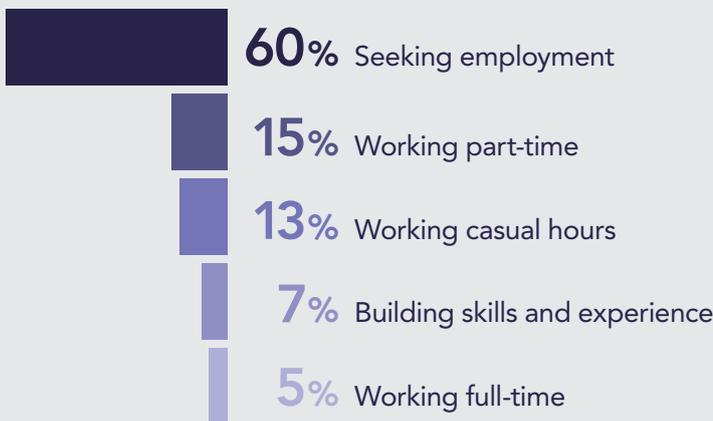
Employment is a critical facilitator of integration for CALD migrants, as it supports wellbeing, a sense of belonging, builds capability, and facilitates social relationships.

## Baryalay Malyar

Australian citizen with extensive overseas experience

*" Finding a steady, permanent job is a priority for migrants. It doesn't matter what the job is, but if there is an assurance the role is permanent, that will make the individual feel more secure. If you change jobs every year, you don't have the opportunity to grow – but if you stay in the once place, you learn a lot. "*

### CALD customers current work situation



# Value of relevant skills and experience

According to ABS data, up to two-thirds of migrants who enter Australia each year are skilled.

This means that, before COVID-19 restrictions closed international borders, up to 125,000 migrants entered the country each year possessing extensive professional skills and knowledge and who have the potential to contribute significantly to the Australian economy.

And yet, for many CALD migrants, the existing skillsets and experience earned in overseas workplaces is not enough to convince Australian employers to hire them.

A 2018 Deloitte Access Economics report found that 49 in every 100 skilled migrants weren't using the skills or experience that they gained before arriving in Australia.

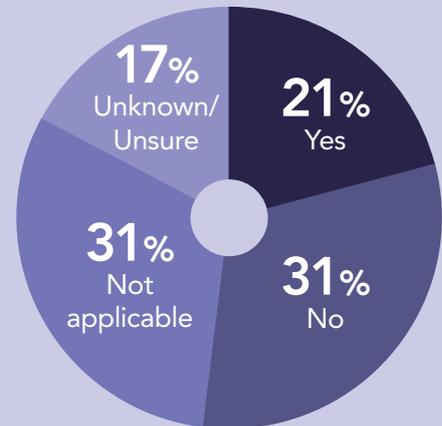
Concerningly, only 20% of CALD customers surveyed confirmed that their overseas qualifications or job experience was recognised by employers in Australia. This is despite 45% of respondents having between five and 20 years of experience in their chosen field.

Worryingly still, 51% of customers said they had upskilled by completing industry relevant training since arriving in Australia, but the additional accreditation had not necessarily translated to employment for many.

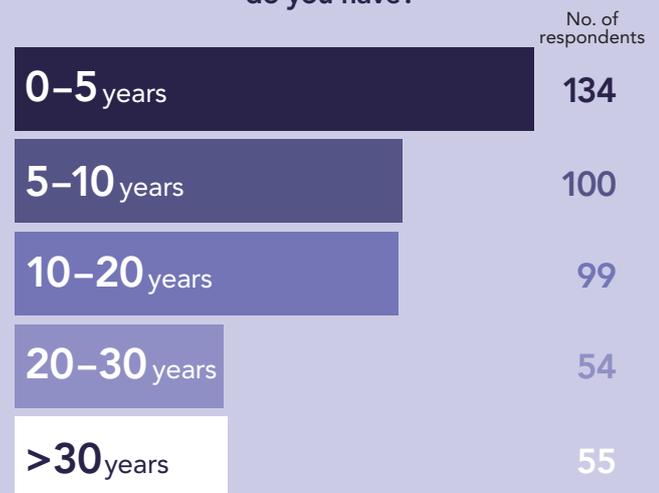
Feedback from customers revealed that the majority of employers favoured industry experience in Australia, regardless of a migrant applicant's existing skills. This is problematic, given that many CALD jobseekers either struggle to gain entry level positions – or were unwilling to commit to a role that they felt was a step backward.

When coupled with the time needed to learn conversational English and/or industry specific terminology, in some instances, it was found that skilled CALD jobseekers can invariably spend a considerable amount of time seeking work in their specialised field.

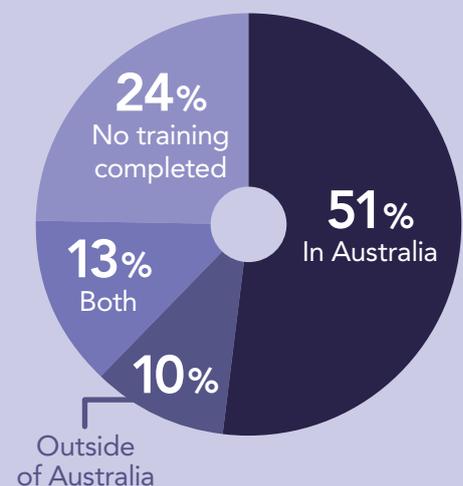
Q. My overseas qualification/job experience was recognised by employers in Australia:



Q. How many years of work experience do you have?



Q. I have completed industry relevant training:



As a consequence, many skilled migrant jobseekers reported being pushed into unskilled or low-skilled roles out of necessity, which they said had impacted on their motivation to work as well as their overall mental health.



**Baryalay Malyar**

Australian citizen with extensive overseas experience

*"I think the key issue in Australia is devaluation of experience and skills from other countries – or international organisations – which makes it very difficult to find work here. I don't really understand why, when you've worked for an institution such as the World Bank, or the United Nations, and you come here and people ask "well, where is your Australian experience?" I don't know how different Australian experience is – surely it is the skills you have? "*

*"We know that, over the past four or five years, most of the Syrian and Iraqi humanitarian entrants come from highly educated backgrounds – there are lots of engineers, lots of doctors, and they are unable to find work in those professions, and so they end up taking anything. "*

**Atem Atem**

Fairfield City Council,  
Social Planning and Advocacy team

# Learning language vs gaining employment

## Balancing competing priorities

For many people from CALD backgrounds, particularly new migrants to Australia, there can be a need to balance improving English language skills with gaining employment. These two, often conflicting, priorities means that jobseekers are forced to choose one over the other.

Often, the need for a wage overrides the desire to build necessary, job-ready English skills – and CALD jobseekers may accept unskilled or inconsistent employment opportunities to ‘get by’ as a consequence, perhaps without realising that improving their English could significantly increase the opportunities available to them.

**Nasratullah Kharoti**  
Afghan jobseeker

*“The main obstacle for me is language – language is top of the issues facing most immigrants. Being able to communicate effectively in any area is obviously important – from job to schooling to even finding your way around or buying food, you need to be able to communicate.”*

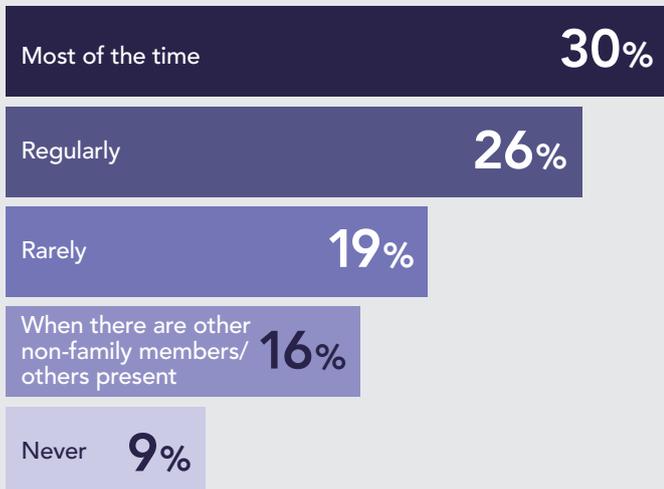
Refugee and humanitarian entrants in particular, largely due to their forced migration experience and countries of origin, often arrive in Australia with limited-to-no English.

44% of CALD customers said they never or rarely use English at home – or only on occasions when people from outside the family were present. As a consequence, these jobseekers may find that employment opportunities for them are limited.

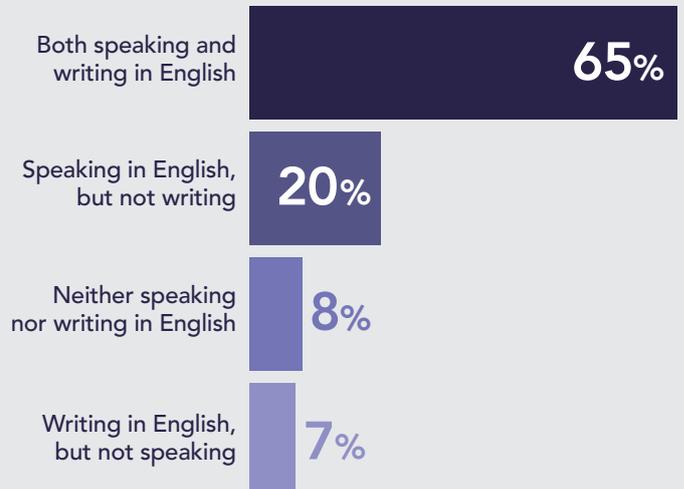
65% of MAX and HOST customers said they are confident speaking and writing in English, but 47% admitted their English skills still needed improvement before they start work in Australia. Among CALD survey respondents, it was found that an individual’s confidence and the actual competency required for employment may not always be aligned.

42% of customers said that they regularly or often had to act as an interpreter for older relatives in Australia – and 62% admitted that helping family members with their needs impacted on their ability to work their desired hours.

### Q. How often do you use English at home?

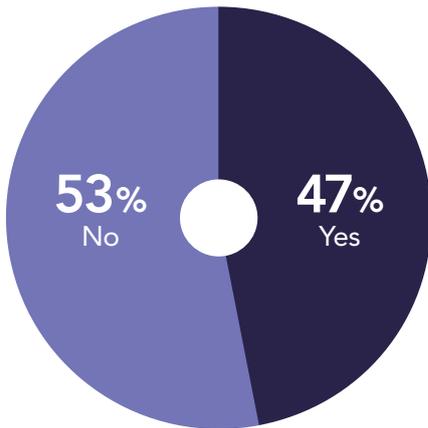


### Q. I am confident:

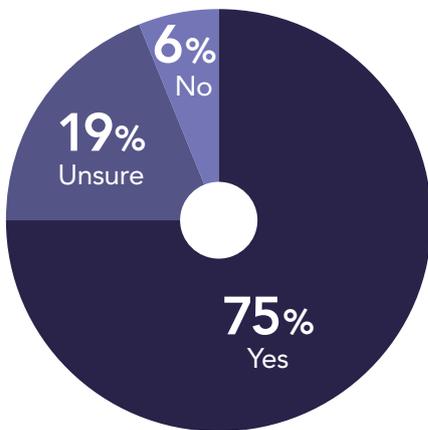


Some educational representatives and migrant jobseekers voiced concern that, while programs exist to help people from CALD backgrounds improve their language skills, the trend seems to be that job seekers are rushing, or being rushed, into employment before they have the skills they need.

**Q. I need/needed to learn English before working in Australia:**



**Q. Do you think that you have the appropriate English skills to work in your desired job in Australia?**



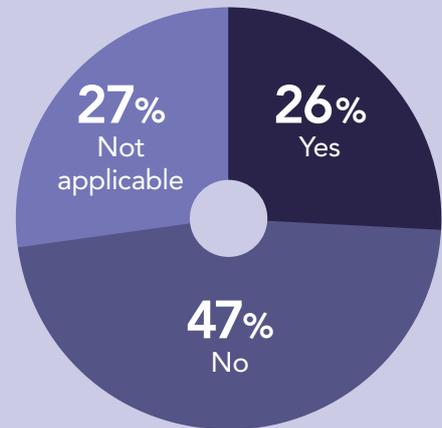
**Myriam Bahari**

Community Engagement Coordinator,  
TAFE New South Wales

*" Our experience has been that there is a pressure to get work – both from within an individual's family, as well as from job service providers. People don't come back to improving their language skills once they start working. In fact, it may be much later that they come back. "*

**Workplace relationships**

**Q. I've struggled to connect with my co-workers in Australia due to my language skills:**



**AMEP Service Provider Officer**

*" For people arriving in Australia, getting a job is important, but it should be about integrating into the community. "*

**AMEP Service Provider Officer**

*" Anybody who is eligible for AMEP can undertake the program until they reach the Vocational English level. But if someone wants to improve on their language skills, there must be consistency. "*

## Pathways to improving language skills



An Australian Government Initiative

### Skills for Education and Employment (SEE) program

The SEE program is a program for those jobseekers who are looking to improve their literacy, numeracy, digital skills, confidence and job-seeking skills in order to find, and maintain, long-term employment. Students are referred to the program by their employment service provider, and the program is tailored to the student's individual goals.



### The Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) program

The AMEP is a legislated program that is funded by the Australian Government Department of Home Affairs. It is the Australian Government's largest English language program, available to eligible new migrants and humanitarian entrants, who have less than vocational English. The program provides language and literacy tuition to migrants and humanitarian entrants to help improve their English language skills, so they can settle and fully participate in the Australian community and workforce.

#### AMEP Service Provider Officer

*"With the current legislation, we have people coming back to AMEP who have not accessed it for 20 years. This is because, when they came to Australia in those days, some of them would have found blue collar work and they didn't really need to use English because everything was available to them within their migrant community. But right now, they've realised the world has evolved – and they're coming back to build a foundation for everyday use."*

# Finding information and advice

There is a library of broad information and advice available online for CALD jobseekers – including government resources and private agency websites; however, the task of finding what is current, correct and relevant often falls to the individual. The difficulty of the task can be inflated if the jobseeker has a poor understanding of English, lacks digital literacy, or does not understand where to start.

As a result, CALD jobseekers often reach out for assistance in finding work. Indeed, ABS figures show that among recent migrants who have had a job since arrival, almost half (48%) received some form of help to find their first job, most commonly from friends or family (69%).

However, feedback received from report survey participants revealed that, in many instances, jobseekers largely found it easy to access the information and advice that they required.

Of the CALD customers surveyed, 74% said it was difficult to find the right information and/or support services to help them get a job. Only 26% of respondents said that it was easy or very easy to find the help they needed.

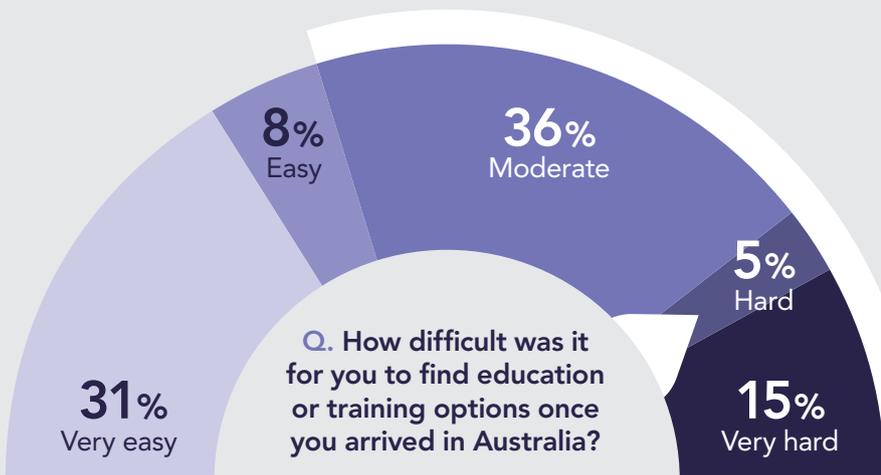
The majority of customers (71%) used Seek and other online employment platforms to look for work, while 62% were currently using an employment services provider to help get them into work.

56% of customers said they found it difficult to find training options, while only 25% of respondents admitted they struggled to find information relevant to them regarding training.

## Naseer Malikzai

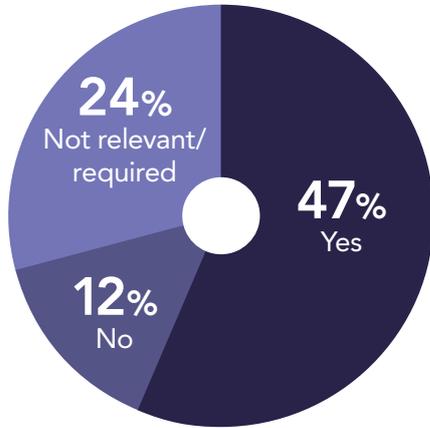
Afghan migrant and government intern

*"We got all possible support for our immediate settlement in Australia. The foremost key priority for everyone at my age is to find a job as soon as possible. Despite the fact that I had good qualifications, I had a lot of concern about my job. I was unable to find resources right away – where to start, how to start, and how to get into the market."*

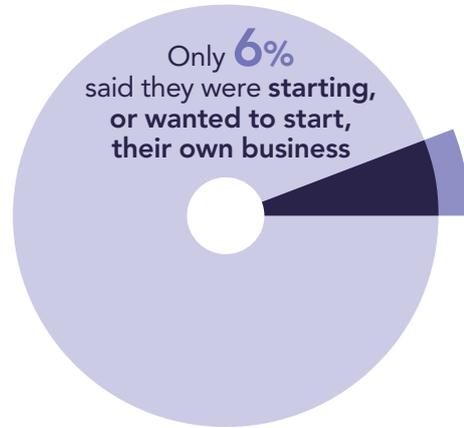


5% of CALD customers responded Not Applicable

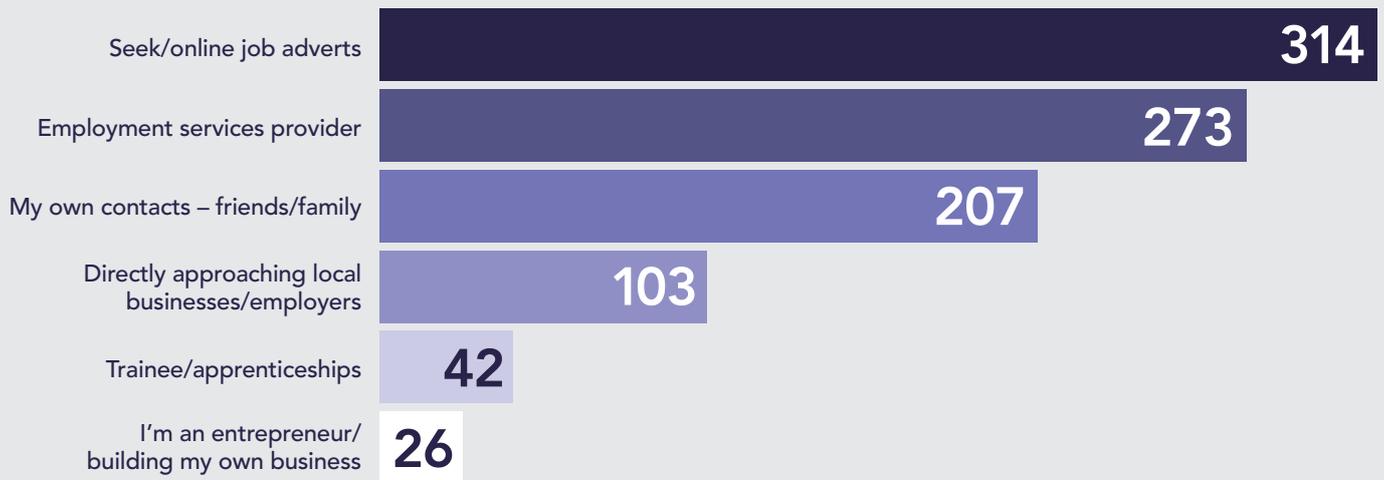
**Q. I feel I can access enough support through the Australian health system (if required) to allow me to work:**



**Q. Instances of entrepreneurship:**



**Q. How people are looking for work:**



**Simon Sogora**

Employment Training and Education Specialist

*“ There are several support services with many great initiatives; there are several funding opportunities from Federal and state governments – but these are often disconnected to support the refugee jobseekers. Ideally, there is need centralise sources of information in a clear services directory, so that when a refugee or migrant jobseeker gets online, they can easily get the right information and identify clear pathways. The fact that there’s information all over the place can be confusing and misleading to refugees and migrants. ”*

# Additional factors for consideration

Previous research has shown that the following factors are known to impact a people from CALD backgrounds when seeking employment. While MAX and HOST recognise the significance of these factors, they were not emphasised repeatedly as key themes by survey respondents and roundtable participants during the compilation of this white paper.

## Limited access to public transport and affordable housing

Where people from CALD backgrounds live determines not only how easily they can access local employment opportunities, but how easily they can travel to work; access nearby childcare and educational facilities for families; and how much money they need to earn to live comfortably in a particular area. These considerations all play a part in determining what kind of employment an individual will seek.

## Mature age workers

Mature age people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds reported experiencing similar issues to English-speaking mature age jobseekers. Many said they felt employers wouldn't consider them due to their age, regardless of their expertise or skillset.

Previous research by MAX found that 85% of mature age jobseekers believe employers often have some reluctance or uncertainty when hiring older people.

## Cultural factors

Different cultural factors and family models within CALD migrant communities play a significant part in determining who in the family works, and how often. For instance, some cultures stipulate that women do not work outside of the home. Understanding these cultural beliefs, and educating migrant communities on employment options is key to increasing CALD employment opportunities.

Further, CALD migrants may encounter different workforce practices than they are accustomed to in their countries of origin.

For example, volunteer work as it is undertaken in Australia may not be the same as in other countries and, therefore, CALD migrants may struggle with the concept of volunteering for a role with the outcome of achieving paid work. This is particularly relevant if the individual is the 'bread winner', whose family depends on them receiving an income.

This shows the importance of wage subsidies to the CALD population, to incentivise employers to employ CALD and allow them to start work with little or no work experience.

### Elias Kabura

President, Association of the Burundian Community of South Australia

*"There are traditional views of men as provider for families in many communities. After 12 years in Australia, I can see that there is more equality. Women may have more limitations in work experience than men."*

*"Volunteering is a great way to get experience but depends on circumstance. If you are the main bread winner, you might not have that luxury. It creates a vicious cycle."*

### Nathaly Parish

Multicultural Community Liaison Officer, New South Wales Police

### Elias Kabura

President, Association of the Burundian Community of South Australia

*"Many migrants simply don't understand volunteer work or have experience of that."*

### Visa types impacting work options

Some CALD jobseekers admitted that their visa type severely restricted how much they can work, and the employment options available to them. This is particularly relevant for asylum seekers and refugees who are limited to how many hours they can work while in Australia.

According to the ABS, 68% of the 1.9 million recent migrants in 2019 were employed. Of the employed, 77% of people with Australian citizenship and 75% on a permanent visa were employed full-time, compared with 48% of temporary residents.

### Discrimination

It is known that, regrettably, discrimination still exists in Australian society. Some CALD jobseekers reported suspected discrimination in recruitment, bias against migrants, lack of recognition of previous experience, and suspected religious discrimination. Some CALD job seekers may also decide to adopt an anglicised name or remove their address details if living in a multicultural area. Though this kind of discrimination remains illegal in the workplace, prospective employers aren't obligated to explain why a person was not hired, so often discrimination remains unspoken.



# From the roundtables

## Nathaly Parish

Multicultural Community Liaison Officer,  
New South Wales Police

*"Improving employment outcomes for CALD people is a very complex issue, but I think the main take-away is that we need to be more personalised in our approach – I think we need to look at more tailored activities; understand an individual's needs and aspirations; and manage expectations around practical needs versus long-term goals."*

*"There's no clear answer to the question, but the main thing is to put together programs that help migrants achieve what they want to achieve – I know a lot of them want to work, they're fit to work. We need to find the best way to motivate and support people, so they're not just sitting at home; get people actively participating in the workforce."*

## Elias Kabura

President, Association of  
the Burundian Community  
of South Australia

## Atem Atem

Fairfield City Council,  
Social Planning and Advocacy team

*"A lot of Afghans have quite similar challenges to finding employment, but it's no great surprise that language is one of the top issues facing migrants – being able to communicate effects every area of life. A lot of Afghan immigrants need time to learn the language, so that we have an opportunity to showcase our skill. There are people who have worked in Afghanistan in top positions, but they're not familiar with how to find work in Australia."*

## Nasratullah Kharoti

Afghan jobseeker

*"The impact of casualisation of employment on refugees and migrants who have recently arrived, and who are trying to settle, it makes it very difficult because of the uncertainty that comes with that form of employment. It's a systemic problem because it's the kind of work that recent arrivals, especially refugees, tend to find available to them."*

*We know that, over the past four or five years, most of the Syrian and Iraqi humanitarian entrants come from highly educated backgrounds – there are lots of engineers, lots of doctors, and they are unable to find work in those professions, and so they end up taking anything."*

## Carla Zafiriadis

Employment Manager, Multicultural Australia

*"We live in a very connected world. It seems like some employers don't value diversity as much as they could – different people, different ways of thinking, and different customs. It's definitely something that should be discussed more with employers as a benefit for their business."*

# From the roundtables

## Tamana Mirzada

Employment Coordinator,  
Jesuit Refugee Service – Australia

*“ We’ve found that the gaps in employment have come from the casualisation of the workforce. This is in addition to the overall uncertainty caused by COVID-19 – and, I think, people have just lost motivation to work in these temporary roles.*

*Highly professional, white collar jobs are not accessible to people on temporary visas – they’re often turned down and there’s preference for someone with permanent residency or Australian citizenship. Your visa status very much determines what you can do, and what you can achieve, which is really unfortunate because there’s so many highly skilled people in migrant communities. ”*



## Leon Gallego

Columbian jobseeker

*“ I studied Certificate III and Certificate IV in Diesel Engine Technology in Australia, and got a working visa. When I couldn’t find a long-term job, I felt bad – I reached a very low point, because I was facing the daunting prospect of going back to my country after investing over five years of my life over in Australia. ”*



*“ I fear that, when pushed into work, people will get lower-end jobs, be comfortable and thankful in those jobs, then turn 40 and may want to do more – but find it difficult to upskill. ”*

## Myriam Bahari

Community Engagement Coordinator,  
TAFE New South Wales



*“ In terms of refugees – the experiences that they may have had in their home countries can take an enormous toll on mental health and wellbeing and can very much impact on people’s ability to work and the job seeking process. I think it’s important to have a really good understanding of where the individual is situated, in terms of what would work well for them in terms of employment outcomes and mental health.*

*For many people, engaging in a meaningful way in a job that they enjoy, and get satisfaction from, having positive experiences, having social interaction in the employment environment – these things can be good things in terms of contributing to mental health. ”*

## Dr. Angela Nickerson

Professor of Psychology,  
University of New South Wales



# Recommendations

- > Ensure adequate training is available for employment service providers to ensure appropriate capability in understanding and responding to the unique needs of CALD job seekers
- > Explore opportunities to overcome local experience barriers by increasing work experience programs and paid internships
- > Work with industry and accreditation authorities to address misunderstandings about overseas qualifications and to reduce the costs associated with local recognition of specific qualifications
- > Create opportunities for migrants who have managed to re-establish their career in Australia to share their experiences with newcomers and service providers to better understand what works and what doesn't
- > Increase collaboration between mainstream and specialist service providers to facilitate sector development and minimise siloing of services. Collaboration should also minimise competition for job seeker time and accommodate adjustments for work obligations
- > Create more public stories of migrants who have contributed positively to the Australian workforce including the experiences of employers in relation to the challenges and benefits of increasing diversity in the workplace
- > Review employment services funding to enable more flexible and tailored supports for CALD job seekers that recognise their specific needs
- > Establish mentoring programs to support CALD job seekers to remain motivated and to access jobs suited to their qualifications and experience rather than remaining in entry level roles
- > Establish clear, concise and accessible information resources to support self-efficacy and to avoid confusion and discouragement
- > Develop tools that enable CALD job seekers to identify available work opportunities and to understand gap requirements if they do not meet industry expectations for their desired roles
- > Explore opportunities to extend employer incentives related to diversity employment in some sectors



# With thanks

MAX Solutions and HOST International wish to thank the 442 survey respondents who participated in our CALD: *living and working in Australia survey – November 2021*.

We would also like to pass on our sincere thanks to the attendees of the series of CALD digital roundtables that were held 1–2 December 2021. Your discussion, opinions, and feedback greatly informed this report.

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- > **Eduardo Donoso**, Chairperson, Latin American Society of South Australia (LASSA)
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- > **Philip Feinstein**, Founder, Music for Refugees

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