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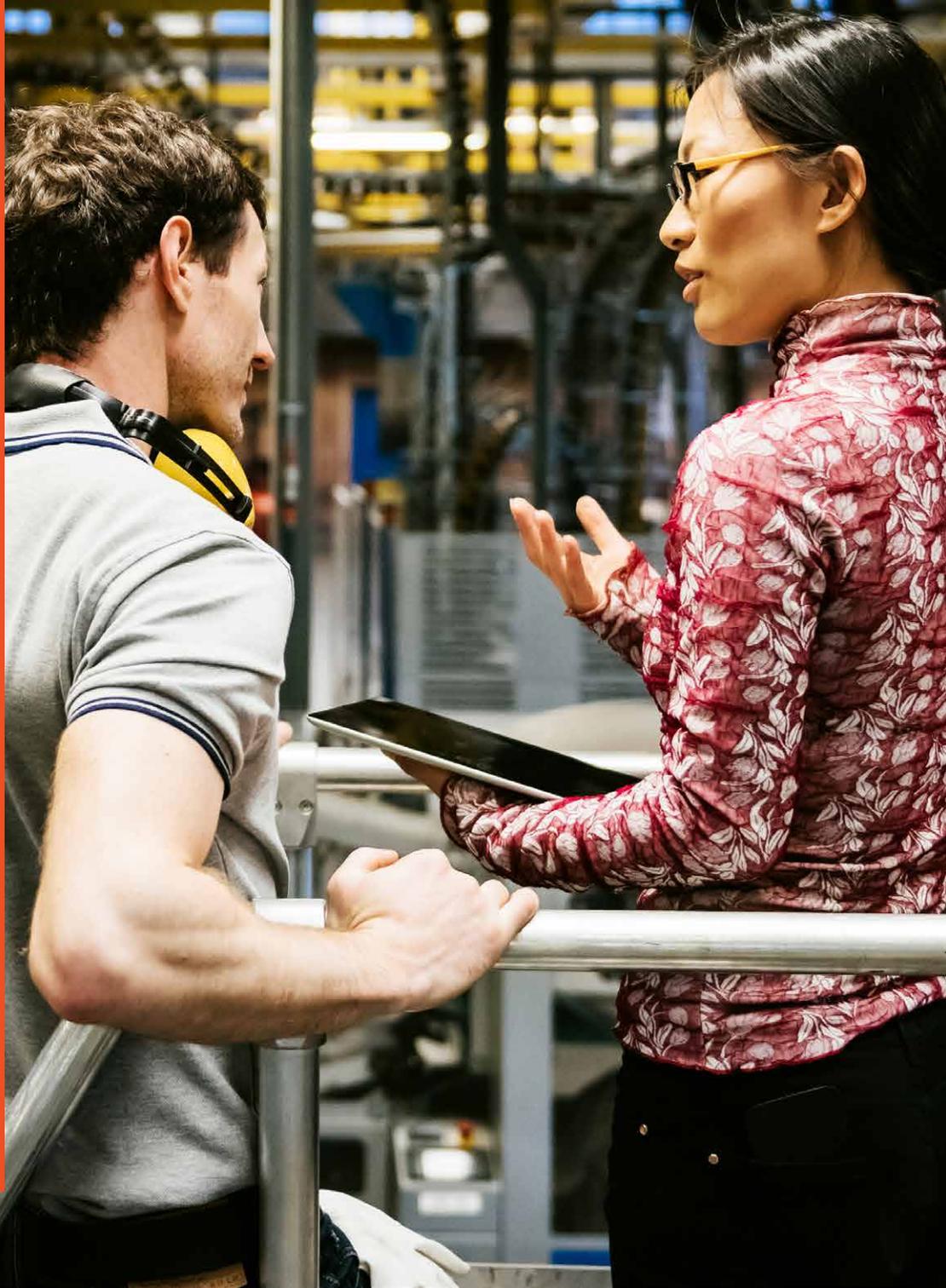
# Engaging business in refugee employment

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# Engaging Business in Refugee Employment

The employers' perspective

The University of Sydney Business School



In collaboration with



Thank you to everyone who took the time to participate in this study. This report would not have been possible without your contribution.

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# 1. Executive Summary

## Background

Since 1945, when the first federal immigration portfolio was established to administer Australia's post-war migration program, over 800,000 refugees and other humanitarian entrants have settled in Australia (Phillips, 2017, p1). Fast forward to 2017–18, and a total of 16,250 visas were granted under the Humanitarian Program, of which 7,909 were refugee visas (Australian Government Department of Home Affairs, 2019). In 2018–19, the Humanitarian Migration Program is set at 18,750 places (Australian Government Department of Home Affairs, 2019) and that level is expected to be maintained for the current term of government.

Humanitarian migrants in Australia are an extremely diverse cohort in terms of their countries of origin, levels of education, educational background and English skills (BNLA, 2017); factors which affect their employment prospects across the majority of industries. The opportunities for workforce integration of many humanitarian migrants may also be adversely affected by the lack of recognition of foreign credentials (BNLA, 2017) and lack of local work experience and references (Colic-Peisker & Walker, 2003).

Despite the human potential and ambitious aspirations of humanitarian migrants (Ilaj, 2014), they face higher levels of unemployment and lower levels of labour market participation than the average Australian (Settling Better, 2017). The aim of this report is to understand employers' perceptions and experiences of hiring refugees, and how public policy could encourage or support employers to employ refugees successfully in greater numbers on a sustainable basis.

## Research objectives and methods

This study looks at the perceptions of employers that have and have not hired refugees. The aim is to gain insight into employers' perceptions, misconceptions and experiences of the integration of refugees into the workforce by investigating:

- motives for hiring refugees;
- challenges and best practices for integrating refugees into the workforce;
- desired support and incentives that could help employers hire refugees successfully; and
- measures that government or non-governmental groups could take to increase sustainable refugee employment in Australia.

The study is based on the results of an online survey and in-depth interviews. 118 respondents participated in the online survey between February and April 2019. The insights of 15 companies (29 research participants in total) were collected through in-depth interviews between December 2018 and April 2019. Research participants were sought through multiple avenues, including publicly available databases and employer networks of service providers, local government and other intermediaries.

# Main findings

1. The perceived benefits of hiring refugees often outweighed the challenges for employers seeking to hire them. Employers indicated that hiring refugees gives them the ability to serve certain customer bases in their own language and with cultural sensitivity; they appreciated the work ethic of refugee employees and valued the experience and diversity in perspectives that refugees brought to the workplace. Many employers described refugees as eager to learn, hardworking and committed.
2. Employers who had hired or actively sought to hire refugees perceived most potential barriers as less challenging than those who had not sought to hire refugees. Assumed challenges and misconceptions around factors such as visa status, work rights, uncertainty about the duration of stay and absenteeism were rarely a concern among employers who had employed refugees and who had sought to hire refugees.
3. Successful hiring and retention of refugees requires a long-term, holistic approach, involving all levels of management, the support of influential staff members and the engagement of peers and supervisors. Employers identified corporate social responsibility (CSR) and senior leadership as main motivators for refugee hiring initiatives.
4. First experiences can be very powerful. Due to unfamiliarity with the refugee cohort and the visibility of 'refugees' as a social category of employees, some employer feedback suggests that the level of success of the first contact could be decisive in determining whether an employer would or would not continue hiring refugees.
5. Wage subsidies were not a motivating factor for most employers (though some noted their potential relevance). Many large companies did not see a need for government subsidies or felt that the use of subsidies was not justified in the absence of a strong financial need on the part of the employer. Small businesses often had no capacity to make use of a potential subsidy as they wouldn't consider hiring refugees due to perceived barriers such as the need for additional upskilling of refugee jobseekers, which was difficult for smaller employers to deliver on site.
6. Specialist service providers played a significant and positive role. These providers are often not-for-profits or social enterprises (other than jobactive providers) whose core mission is to place refugees or other jobseekers from culturally diverse backgrounds into appropriate employment. This finding is in contrast to the recent expert review of mainstream jobactive service providers<sup>1</sup>.
7. Many employers used a full suite of service provider offerings (e.g. search, culture training, resume and interview preparation, etc). Poor quality candidate referrals were the main reason that employer collaborations with service providers were discontinued.
8. Social procurement targets<sup>2</sup> were only perceived as relevant in certain industries (e.g. infrastructure /construction). Within these industries, the use of social procurement frameworks was considered effective for creating scalable employment opportunities for refugees and other disadvantaged groups.
9. Industry-specific training (e.g. English language, technical skills) was flagged by employers as important. Generic training programs provided by the government were seen as insufficient to set up a refugee employee for success.
10. Employers lacked knowledge regarding refugee employment, including how to identify and reach refugee job seekers and what government incentives are available.
11. The perceptions of refugee workforce integration differed within organisations. Even within small employers, human resources (HR) staff and senior management were often disconnected from the reality of daily interactions and workplace integration challenges faced by refugees or possible hidden costs.

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<sup>1</sup> Employment Services Expert Advisory Panel report, I Want to Work: Employment Services 2020 (2018).

<sup>2</sup> This refers to the concept of organisations choosing to pursue a certain social outcome when they buy a good or a service and may involve organisations setting targets for employment of individuals with particular backgrounds.

# Summary of recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are an initial set of possible measures to encourage and support greater employer engagement with refugee jobseekers.

## **A. Highlight and communicate benefits, success stories and 'best practices':**

- Share success stories, educate and create awareness among business leaders and decision makers, to address misconceptions and create a positive public narrative around refugee employment.
- Provide industry-specific sample cases of refugee workforce integration that could be widely shared and readily replicated.
- Better promote the availability of existing support services for employers (including government and non-government services).

## **B. Rethink wage subsidies and increase funding for partnerships and sustainable refugee employment initiatives:**

- Rethink the use of wage subsidies as an incentive for employer engagement, drawing on Australian and international evidence to inform their future structure and design.
- Consider increased support for service providers that have developed effective methods for achieving sustainable refugee employment.
- Use grants in addition to or instead of wage subsidies to encourage employer programs and/or partnerships between employers and specialist service providers, with minimal 'red tape' to encourage engagement of small and mid-sized employers.
- Fund programs to help offset the cost of recruiting refugees and ensuring their successful integration within the workplace.

## **C. Increase the use of social procurement frameworks:**

- Ensure that social procurement frameworks clearly identify 'refugees' as a desired employee/contractor category and expand social procurement to more industries to replicate success achieved in some parts of the infrastructure industry.
- Explore opportunities to include 'refugee employment' as a positive screening measure within ethical investment frameworks.

## **D. Add training, education and resources for employers:**

- Create training or information sharing opportunities to help employers learn from their peers about effective refugee employment strategies.
- Support the development of a jobs portal for employers seeking to recruit refugees, including listings of job opportunities and useful resources, such as how to meet social procurement targets. Give all employment service providers access to this portal (including those that are not jobactive providers).

## **E. Support matching refugee skills/qualifications with industry needs:**

- Guide employers how to think laterally about the qualifications and skills that are needed for a particular role.
- Provide support and frameworks for industry-specific language and skills training to help upskill refugees in fields where there is high demand for labour (including through the use of place-based approaches).

**F. Engage communities and employers to provide mentorship and support:**

- Consider opportunities to encourage and empower community members, employers and relevant target groups (such as industry associations) to take ownership of the task of increasing refugee employment through mentoring programs, workplace-funded internships or more holistic approaches.

**G. Encourage customised, collaborative community efforts:**

- With the importance placed on collaborative efforts, refugee workforce integration requires collaboration of multiple stakeholders in specific geographic locations. In places where there is a large number of humanitarian migrants, the use of place-based approaches or 'community deals' (harnessing federal, state and local efforts) could provide key local actors with the resources and freedom to collectively develop and implement tailored local solutions.

## Next steps

The authors plan to undertake further research and consultation with a wider variety of stakeholders to develop a more detailed set of policy recommendations for Australian governments and other stakeholders. These recommendations will be published in an *Options Paper: Increasing Sustainable Refugee Employment* in the second half of 2019.

This study opens numerous avenues for further research into employer engagement across industries, the challenges faced by employers of various sizes, and workforce integration of refugees with diverse backgrounds and employment profiles (e.g. gender, skilled vs. unskilled jobseekers, ethnic minorities). Specific investigations could focus on the utilisation of subsidies and the design of partnership grants. More research is also needed to identify successful case studies in specific industries that could be shared and replicated.

## 2. Introduction

### Problem identification

Finding suitable employment is one of the most important steps in the integration of a refugee into a new community (Feeney, 2000; Lee et al., 2018). Yet global experience reveals that many refugees end up unemployed (Beiser & Hou, 2001), under-employed (Krahn et al., 2000; Vinokurov et al., 2017), or working in the informal economy sector (Crush et al., 2017), and often failing to find permanent jobs that match their skill levels (Krahn et al., 2000; Mahuteau & Junankar, 2008; Cheng et al., 2017). Our literature review outlines workforce integration challenges faced by refugees in developed economies such as Australia.

These challenges are unfortunate and avoidable. Refugees bring qualifications and skills to the receiving country (e.g. Phillimore & Goodson, 2006), with the potential to meet labour shortages in urban and rural areas and in a wide range of white- and blue-collar occupations (e.g. Brees, 2008; Bais et al., 2017). Refugees in Australia are also highly entrepreneurial (see recent Centre for Policy Development report – Seven Steps to Success, 2019) and beyond doubt provide long-term macro-economic benefits to receiving countries through both workforce participation and business activities (e.g. d’Albis et al. 2018).

There is a great deal of research documenting various support systems available to refugees who seek employment and the challenges faced by refugees in their quests for employment (Lee et al. 2018). Yet the role and experiences of employers are topics that have been largely neglected in this research. We know little about industry experience of hiring refugees, engagement drivers, which incentives or support measures are the most effective at influencing the behaviours and choices of employers with respect to refugees, or which incentives are most salient to businesses that currently hire refugees. These gaps have been confirmed by a comprehensive literature review (Lee et al. 2018) and our consultation with numerous stakeholders working within the sector (e.g. Friendly Nation Initiative, Refugee Council of Australia and Settlement Council of Australia). At the same time, there is significant anecdotal evidence that many Australian employers are interested in employing refugees and are seeking to do so of their own accord.

More needs to be understood about how public policy settings could encourage or support employers to continue to employ refugees, to employ more refugees in greater numbers, and to employ refugees in a way that leads to optimum outcomes from the perspective of employers and individual refugees. This report is the first step towards the understanding of the role of employers in refugee workforce integration.

### Literature review

#### **Multidisciplinary insights on the role of employers in refugee workforce integration**

This research project started with an extensive interdisciplinary literature review undertaken by the University of Sydney Business School. This review exposed the presence of the *canvas ceiling* – invisible, multi-level, systemic barriers to refugee workforce integration (Lee, et al., 2018). It also revealed the scarcity of knowledge on employers’ perspectives on refugee employment, their experiences of hiring refugees, and drivers of engagement to hire refugees.

Research shows that refugees are often offered and accept, low-skilled, low-paying, dangerous and illegal jobs in many countries, despite constituting a widely accessible and attainable talent pool (e.g. Thornton 2006; Brees 2008; Kenny and Lockwood-Kenny 2011). Further research on refugee workforce integration indicates that substandard employment outcomes are often induced by poor organisational structures and practices on the part of employers, in addition to ethnocentrism and discrimination spreading through organisations.

#### **Recruitment**

Despite acknowledging the importance and positive impact of diverse workforce on organisational performance (Sheehan and Anderson 2015), refugees tend to be ignored in employers’ diversification plans, which stagnates their employability and earning potential (Syed 2008; De Vroome and Van Tubergen 2010; Gaillard and Hughes 2014). In fact, refugees are victims of multiple levels of discrimination associated with perceptions, such as

uncertain legal status, ethnicity, religious beliefs, gender, accent and appearance (Hugo 2014). Such discrimination is especially prominent among visibly different groups of refugees, such as Muslim women in Australia (Northcote et al. 2006). Swedish scholars Lundborg and Skedinger (2016) revealed systemic marginalisation during refugee recruitment, whereby employers knowingly established higher standards for refugee applicants compared to local employees. UK researchers also found employers refrained from hiring refugees due to demanding and time-consuming processes of assessing foreign qualifications and education (Phillimore and Goodson 2006). At the same time, those who successfully hired refugees were inclined to recruit from this group of migrants again (Lundborg and Skedinger 2016). Australian research indicates that employers are often unaware of their unfair practices and deny marginalising refugee applicants (Fozdar and Torezani, 2008).

### **Training and development**

Without post-employment training and development opportunities, refugees find sustaining employment especially difficult (Aycan and Berry 1996; Miletic 2014). An Australian study found perceived organisational support from employers was positively associated with the psychological well-being of refugee employees (Newman et al. 2018). However, cultural and, to a lesser extent, occupational training is only offered by support organisations immediately post-migration, and not by employers at workplaces (Nawyn 2010). More broadly, the literature suggests that employers seldom invest in job-related up-skilling and on-the-job training designed specifically for refugees. In a UK study, the employers of refugees in menial and low-paid jobs did not identify a need for workplace training for these employees (Bloch 2008). Yet, particularly for highly-skilled refugees, periods of unemployment induce skills deterioration, making post-employment training or retraining essential (Stewart 2003; Bloch 2008). Without such training, refugees' upward mobility is impeded by a lack of workplace skill development (Bloch 2004).

### **Compensation**

Employment terms and conditions for refugees in receiving countries are conspicuously poor compared to other migrants (Yu et al. 2007; Phythian et al. 2009). Despite an upward trend in earnings from 2000 and 2010 in Canada, refugees lingered at the lowest end of the earning scale (Sweetman and Warman 2013). Wage discrepancies persist for numerous reasons. In the UK, only a high level of local education was positively associated with higher employment rates and greater earnings for refugees (Bloch 2008). A similar Australian study suggested this may be due to employers' lack of understanding, as well as time and resource restraints in recognising home-country qualifications (Cheng et al. 2019). Yet, even following the acquisition of local qualifications, refugees continued to have lower earnings when compared to other ethnic minority groups in the UK (Bloch 2008). Lower wages and poor employment terms and conditions were not solely the result of shortcomings in understanding qualifications and experiences, but also a by-product of discriminatory biases against refugee employees. Swedish researchers found that employers' preconceptions that refugee employees lacked co-operation skills, was one reason for pay disparities between local and refugee employees (Lundborg and Skedinger 2016). In such cases personal judgements and stereotypes, rather than objective measures of performance, were shown to have unfairly influence remuneration assessments.

### **Workplace integration**

Existing research suggests refugees can experience a general climate of exclusion or isolation in the workplace (Lamba 2003; Baranik et al. 2018; Knappert et al. 2018). Refugees often perceive employers, supervisors and co-workers as uninformed, rather than malicious perpetrators of discrimination and exploitation (Boese 2015). Despite anti-discrimination and equal opportunity policies, refugees are often excluded from the inner circle of workplaces. (Baranik, et al., 2018). A Canadian survey of 525 refugees found 70% of individuals were unsatisfied with their current employment and 60% considered they were over-qualified and excluded from promotions (Lamba 2003).

These insights paint a rather negative image of the refugee employment experience. They also underscore the importance of employer engagement with the workforce integration of refugees. Facilitating refugee integration into the labour market of the receiving country can also facilitate social inclusion more generally. This study aims to address this important issue by exploring the drivers, perceptions and experiences of employers when they engage in refugee workforce integration.

# 3. Data Overview

## Research objectives

To understand more about the role of employers in refugee workforce integration in Australia, the University of Sydney and the Centre for Policy Development (CPD) collaborated to conduct an online survey and in-depth interviews with employers in late 2018 and early 2019 to gain insight into:

- employers' motives for hiring refugees;
- challenges and best practices in integrating refugees into the workforce;
- support and incentives that could help employers hire refugees successfully; and
- measures that might be taken by government or non-government groups to increase sustainable employment of refugees in Australia.

## Methodology

Two sources of data have been utilised to create this report:

- results of an online survey; and
- in-depth interviews.

The online survey collected feedback from employers who have and have not hired refugees, specifically the survey data divided employers in the following three categories:

- employers that have employed and actively sought to hire refugees;
- employers that have employed but not actively sought to hire refugees; and
- employers that have not employed refugees.

The in-depth interviews specifically focused on employers who had direct experience employing refugees.

While the overall composition of both data collection methods is similar, the sets of respondents were different. As a result, the findings are discussed separately at times and throughout the report we note whether the results refer to interviews, surveys or both.

### Online surveys

The online survey was led by CPD with assistance from a small team of volunteers from BCG. Together they engaged around a dozen intermediary organisations, including not-for-profit employment service providers, the Australian Industry Group, local government authorities and several other intermediaries with large employer networks across Australia, to disseminate the online survey via email.

Of the 118 survey responses, 60 were completed in full and the remaining 58 were partially completed. Respondents represented employers operating in all states and territories across Australia. Most respondents had roles in management or human resources (29% in human resources, 27% at CEO/director level, 27% in other management roles). Respondents came from a broad spread of industries including manufacturing (13%), construction (11%), professional, science and technology (11%), and health care (9%).

### In-depth Interviews

In addition to the online survey, the University of Sydney conducted in-depth interviews with a group of employers who had direct experience hiring refugees. Fifteen (15) employers were interviewed about their hiring practices of refugees. A wide range of employers representing a variety of industries were approached to reflect a broad scope of perspectives.

Employers were based predominantly in New South Wales and Victoria, and operated in the agriculture, construction, finance, food, government, manufacturing, and retail sectors, among others. Company size ranged from 20 to over 100,000 employees.

Of the 15 employers interviewed, 13 were hiring refugees at the time the study took place while two had discontinued hiring refugees. A total of 29 individuals were interviewed, with

roles ranging from CEO or director, to diversity and inclusion staff, human resources personnel and line managers. They shared their views on refugee employment.

The findings are reported in order of importance, assessed by the frequency of a given statement as conveyed in interviews.

### In-depth cases

To gain insight into different perspectives within the workplace, five in-depth cases were conducted in which three to five people per company were interviewed. These in-depth cases aim to provide a more thorough understanding of how perceptions of refugee workforce integration differ based on roles within an organisation.

### Limitations

Not all of the 118 employers surveyed online answered all the questions in the survey, with 58 failing to complete the entire surveys. Their responses have been included where relevant.

The interviews included the perspectives of 15 diverse organisations across Australia. Due to the small sample, feedback should be considered as opportunities for further research and policy recommendations should be treated with caution.

Several employers surveyed and interviewed for this study were approached via existing networks of numerous service providers. Their relationships with service providers might have affected the data pertaining to employers' view of service provider support.

### Definitions

The following definitions were used for the online surveys and in-depth interviews:

**Refugee:** Anyone who self-identified as a refugee or whom an employer believed to have entered Australia on a humanitarian visa or as an asylum seeker within the last 20 years.

**Employers actively seeking to hire:** Organisations deploying deliberate efforts to hire refugees with specific recruitment practices.

**Employers that have not employed refugees:** Organisations that have not hired any refugees within the last five years.

**Employers that have employed and actively sought to hire refugees:** Organisations that have hired at least one refugee within the last five years and have made deliberate efforts to do so with specific recruitment practices.

**Employers that have employed but not actively sought to hire refugees:** Organisations that have hired at least one refugee within the last five years but have not made any deliberate effort to hire refugees.

**Employers that have not actively sought to hire refugees:** Organisations that have not implemented any specific recruitment practices in order to actively seek out refugees, including:

- employers that have not employed refugees; and
- employers that have employed but not sought to hire refugees.

**Service providers:** Not-for-profit organisations and social enterprises, fulfilling social missions such as refugee workforce-integration, reduction of poverty, or newcomer settlement, among others. The findings for jobactive providers are discussed separately from those of other service providers.

**In-depth cases:** Instances where three to five people per company were interviewed, to gain an in-depth understanding of how perceptions on refugee workforce-integration could differ based on roles within an organisation.

### Confidentiality statement

Individuals participating in the survey and/or interview have provided feedback under confidentiality. All references connecting specific feedback to individual interviewees, survey respondents or employers, have been omitted from this report.

*Table 1 – Overview of employers who participated in the in-depth interviews*

<b>Number of interviewees</b>	<b>Role</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Size</b>	<b>Industry</b>
4	2 HR/Diversity & Inclusion 2 Supervisory	Victoria	Large	Construction
4	2 HR/Diversity & Inclusion 2 supervisory	NSW	Large	Finance
3	1 HR/Diversity & Inclusion 2 Supervisory	NSW	Large	Food
3	1 HR/Diversity & Inclusion 2 Supervisory	NSW	Large	Retail
3	1 Leadership 1 Supervisory 1 Training	NSW	Small	Food
2	2 HR/Diversity & Inclusion	NSW	Large	Finance
2	1 Leadership 1 Supervisory	Victoria	Small	Food
1	1 HR/Diversity & Inclusion	NSW	Large	Government
1	1 HR/Diversity & Inclusion	Victoria	Medium	Agriculture
1	1 Supervisory engaged in hiring	NSW	Large	Construction
1	1 Supervisory engaged in hiring	NSW	Medium	Services
1	1 HR/Diversity & Inclusion	Victoria	Large	Government
1	1 HR/Diversity & Inclusion	NSW	Large	Finance
1	1 HR/Diversity & Inclusion	NSW	Large	Hospitality
1	1 HR/Diversity & Inclusion	Victoria	Large	Construction

## 4. Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on the findings of this study and constitute possible measures to explore further. Following the publication of this report, the authors plan to undertake further research and consultation with a wider set of stakeholders to develop a more detailed set of policy recommendations for Australian governments and other stakeholders. These recommendations will be published in an *Options Paper: Increasing Sustainable Refugee Employment* in the second half of 2019.

The findings of this study suggest that Australian governments and other stakeholders explore a number of policy settings and measures to support employers to successfully hire and retain refugee jobseekers in Australia.

### A. Highlight and communicate benefits, success stories and 'best practices'

- As CSR and top-management's initiative were key motivators of engagement, the business case and other benefits of hiring and retaining refugees need to be communicated to business leadership. Established employer networks such as industry groups, should be used to mobilise wider support.
- Positive narratives and success stories need to be more widely publicised to reflect the positive experiences of many employers.
- Parliamentarians and all arms of government should carefully consider their public statements about refugees to prevent unintended negative consequences for refugee jobseekers and employers who may otherwise benefit from hiring them.
- Employer misconceptions that prevent or hinder successful refugee recruitment should be corrected by the sharing of accurate information and advice.
- Attempts should be made to further increase the visibility and/or promotion of existing support services for employers (including government and non-government services).

### B. Rethink wage subsidies and increase funding for partnerships and sustainable refugee employment initiatives

- Subsidies need to be approached with caution, as few employers saw them as motivating factors and some considered them as possibly encouraging undesirable employer behaviours (e.g. short-term hiring to obtain subsidy). Moreover, wage subsidies do not address job readiness, which was identified as a major challenge for refugee employment.
- Wage subsidies could possibly be restructured to create a more effective incentive for employers, while avoiding unintended consequences such as stigmatisation of refugee jobseekers. Areas for future investigation include: revisiting the categories of jobseekers that wage subsidies apply to; the delivery method for wage subsidies (currently only through federal employment service providers such as jobactive); how employers recognise subsidies within their own systems and budgets; and introducing more sophisticated objectives/criteria to enhance the impact of wage subsidies (e.g. more attractive subsidies where employers also include workplace language training for employees from a refugee background).
- Grant funding may offer greater flexibility to employers and could be used to cover employers' costs (such as onboarding programs) rather than relying on subsidies which are tied to individual recruits. Larger companies are more likely to apply for grants due to the scale at which they engage in employment and their greater capacity to respond to grant opportunities. 'Red tape' should be minimised to encourage the engagement of small and mid-sized employers.
- Grants could serve as a tool to separate funding of refugee hiring and retention efforts from the business cycle of a company, by providing resources to maintain refugee employment if a company is facing financial pressures.

- 'Partnership grants' have potential to encourage further collaboration between service providers and employers. They could be initiated by employers and/or service providers for a wide range of initiatives including hiring practices, onboarding, workplace readiness and training.
- Specific grants could alleviate the costs associated with using effective service providers.

### **C. Increase the use of social procurement frameworks**

- Social procurement frameworks offer a way to rapidly scale-up refugee recruitment but targets for refugee recruitments are reportedly only used in the construction/infrastructure sector. There is potential for expansion into other industries.
- Policy makers should consider the potential benefits and drawbacks of 'hard' versus 'soft' procurement targets. This could include considering the feasibility of employers reaching certain targets in different locations across Australia and whether a universal approach is reasonable or desirable.
- 'Soft' targets, where hiring targets are suggested as a desirable business practice, could be beneficial in enabling employers to 'own' the effort instead of just 'comply' with externally imposed hard targets.
- 'Hard' procurement targets, where hiring targets are regulated or included in mandatory procurement requirements, would need to be accompanied by support (e.g., tools for accessing refugee job seekers or support to establish organisational onboarding programs) to make it easier for employers to comply and to avoid creating employer resentment or backlash towards refugee employees.
- The use of social procurement targets (currently a feature of some Victorian government infrastructure procurement arrangements) could be expanded across government and into the private sector (e.g. local council services, superannuation investments).

### **D. Add training, education and resources for employers**

- Create or support the development of a public access job portal to bring service providers, refugees and employers together in one place.
- Separately, or as part of a jobs portal, establish a public access portal to help capture the skills and knowledge of refugee employment experts and support collaboration between universities, industry groups, service providers and employers.
- Facilitate industry-specific platforms for knowledge exchange and industry-peer support.
- Identify and support industry champions to share their knowledge and experience with industry peers.
- Support the delivery of training to employers on hiring and onboarding refugees (e.g. adjusting hiring practices, implementing creative approaches to overcome qualifications hurdles). Explore opportunities provided by e-learning platforms.
- Showcase realistic examples of successful employment, including additional resources required, and the importance of holistic perspectives to understand how refugee workplace integration can affect peers and supervisors.
- Promote early investment in establishing successful hiring practices to improve the chance of success.
- Train employers on other ways to support refugees (e.g. through supply chains that positively engage refugees).

#### **E. Support matching refugee skills/qualifications with industry needs**

- Encourage employers to think laterally about the qualifications and skills that are genuinely needed for a person to perform a particular role, rather than relying on traditional recruitment pathways and practices. Recognition of relevant experience could be more skills-based rather than 'qualifications-based' For example, is an engineering qualification required or could a person with the relevant skills be supported by an Australian qualified engineer where required.
- Achieve short-term impact by providing or supporting training in skills that are in demand in relevant locations and do not require difficult or complex accreditations.
- Support workplace English language training that is tailored by industry (e.g., language used in bakeries is different from language used in construction or banking).
- Encourage and support education- and training-focused collaborations between industry and service providers (e.g. through partnership grants).
- Pursue ongoing efforts to facilitate recognition of international qualifications by lobbying relevant industry bodies.

#### **F. Engage communities and employers to provide mentorship and support**

- Empower industry associations, employers and other stakeholders to take ownership of increasing refugee employment and ensuring successful recruitment outcomes.
- Engage employers and industry in the design of pre-employment training programs for refugees.
- Explore mentoring programs, workplace-funded internships or more holistic approaches such as community sponsorship of refugees (as practiced in Canada and in an increasing number of other countries).

#### **G. Encourage customised, collaborative community efforts**

- Encourage local parties to collaborate and allow tailoring of the way that key federal and state-funded services (including employment, settlement and language services) are delivered and incentivised in places where there are large numbers of refugees. This should be done in close consultation with local employers and/or industry groups. Support for these sorts of measures should be considered in the lead up to the expiry of key federal service contracts, with Adult Migrant English Program service provider contracts due to expire in mid 2020 and employment service contracts and settlement service contracts due to expire in mid 2022.
- Consider approaches that recognise the potential role of workplaces as communities of local residents and not just sites of employment.

## 5. Research Findings

### The prevalence of hiring and retaining refugees, and related challenges and misconceptions

#### Summary

Because supporting refugee language upskilling and assessing/validating overseas qualifications, skills and experience can be a challenge, employers tend to gravitate towards hiring what is “easy and familiar.”

Almost half (48%) of the employers surveyed actively sought to hire refugees.

Biases, English language proficiency and job readiness were widely perceived by employers as challenges that refugees faced in finding employment. The ability of refugees to understand cultural differences and integrate into the “Australian way of doing things” were also concerns for most employers. However, employers who hired or sought to hire refugees did not perceive as many challenges with employing refugees as those who had not.

When employers shared their views on misconceptions about the refugee workforce, the most frequently mentioned presumptions were that refugees were unskilled and that refugee integration into the workforce was going to be “too hard”.

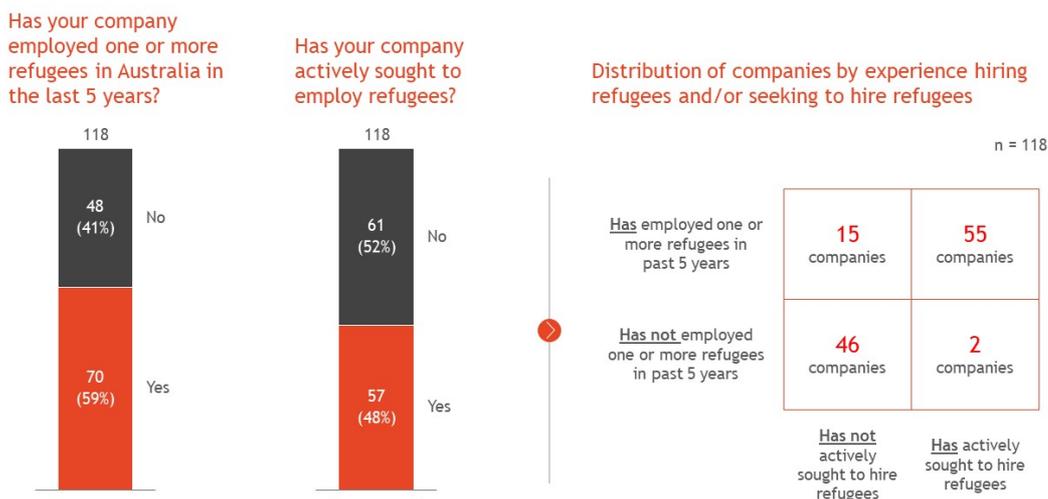
Employer feedback suggested that employers lacked education on refugee employment, including how to identify and reach refugee job seekers.

#### Prevalence of refugee recruitment

Employers interviewed were selected based on their refugee hiring experience. Employers surveyed were asked if they had hired at least one refugee in the past five years.

More than half (59%) of the employers surveyed had employed one or more refugees. Almost half (48%) of the employers surveyed actively sought to hire refugees.

Figure 1-3



Survey questions asked of all companies

The in-depth interviews specifically focused on employers who actively sought to hire refugees. Two of the employers interviewed had discontinued hiring refugees. The pursuit of diversity was a common motivator among employers interviewed and most considered their workforce to be diverse.

**Demographic preference for refugee hires noted for ‘low-skilled’ hiring decisions:** Most employers interviewed who were pursuing diversity within their workforce had hiring objectives by priority group (e.g. persons with disabilities, people who are chronically unemployed, or refugees), not necessarily by demographics such as a specific linguistic or ethnic group. Some employers hiring for low-skilled jobs that required few communications skills actively pursued new hires within the same ethnic group who shared the same language and culture. The practice of hiring within the same ethnic demographic seemed to be a successful strategy for integration, support and retention. Within these groups, the refugees bonded with one another and refugees with more English language skills reportedly provided support to others with fewer English language skills.

**For low-skilled jobs, ‘migrants’ seemed to have an advantage over ‘refugees’:** The perception among employers was that refugees and migrants faced similar barriers in terms of lack of English language skills and lack of Australian work experience. Employers hiring for low-skilled positions found that ‘migrants’ had an advantage over ‘refugees’ because of better English language skills and familiarity with the Australian job-seeking process.

### **Employer perceptions of the challenges that refugees face in finding employment**

Employers who participated in the in-depth interviews were asked to identify the challenges that refugees faced in finding employment.

**Employers’ fears, prejudices and unconscious biases:** Multiple interviewees mentioned that their staff approached recruiting based on feeling more comfortable with “taking the path of least resistance” and hiring what is “easy and familiar.” Negative media coverage and geo-political influence was also mentioned several times. To prevent unconscious biases, one employer used ‘blind’ CVs in their selection process. Another respondent reported that when they were aware of potential biases within the organisation they did not disclose whether a candidate was referred through a refugee-hiring program. Other employers mentioned public opinion and having to defend their refugee hiring practices against “what-about-jobs-for-Australians” scrutiny.

**Lack of English language proficiency:** All employers identified English language skills as an imperative. English language requirements included the ability for refugees to:

- understand instructions;
- understand industry jargons and acronyms;
- communicate verbally in customer-facing roles;
- communicate in written form; and
- provide input in meetings.

One employer identified language as an important prerequisite for establishing personal relationships and making stronger teams.

**Lack of job and workplace readiness:** Most employers considered that it was crucial for new hires to have the basic required knowledge to get started on the job. Examples range from being able to use Microsoft Outlook or Excel, to understanding food and workplace safety. Workplace readiness was found to be equally important. Refugees were expected to understand expectations within Australian workplaces around matters such as punctuality, showing initiative, customer service and Australian social norms.

**Lack of Australian work experience:** Many interviewees stated that when a refugee had a recognised Australian employer on their resume, it was considered a significant advantage. Hiring managers were looking for applicants with recognisable experience, with an employer they knew, and to validate skills and experience.



**Insight:** The onus to overcome barriers to employment is laid mostly on refugees. While service providers help refugees to ease many of the barriers, few solutions were mentioned by employers to address “employers’ fear, prejudice and unconscious biases,” which are out of refugees’ control.

**Inability to pass automated recruitment systems:** A few interviewees noted that larger employers relied on automated recruitment processes to screen job applicants. This affected job seekers with low computer literacy and job seekers with resumes that may not meet Australian standards. “Refugees don’t generally have great CVs, making it difficult to succeed through recruitment processes where the screening happens online.”

**Difficulty navigating the Australian recruitment process:** A few employers interviewed identified resume preparation and Australia’s formalised interviewing process as barriers for refugees who might not have these processes in their home countries.

**Lack of recognition of foreign credentials:** Interviewees identified lack of understanding of the skills that refugees bring as a major barrier to employment. Employers hiring staff in regulated professions identified credential recognition as a barrier that forced some skilled refugees to work in jobs for which they are overqualified. The process of obtaining local registration was also noted as onerous and expensive.

**Lack of confidence:** Employers mentioned the reluctance of some refugees to show their skills because they underestimate their own capabilities or because of cultural influences. One interviewee noted, “...without knowing exactly where their experience is detailed, they’re sort of starting from scratch. And that can hinder them [...] I think they can be a little bit shy about trying to show what their experience is.”

**Lack of a network:** Some interviewees mentioned the disadvantage for refugees of not having a solid professional network in Australia that they could tap into for job search support, job referrals and access to the hidden job market.

**No understanding of transferable skills:** One employer mentioned that lack of knowledge of the Australian workplace was a barrier to helping skilled refugees understand how their existing skills could be transitioned into other lines of work.

**Lack of knowledge on how to access opportunities for sustainable employment:** One employer noted that it was a challenge for refugees to access information and find pathways to sustainable employment opportunities as opposed to casual or cash-in-hand work.

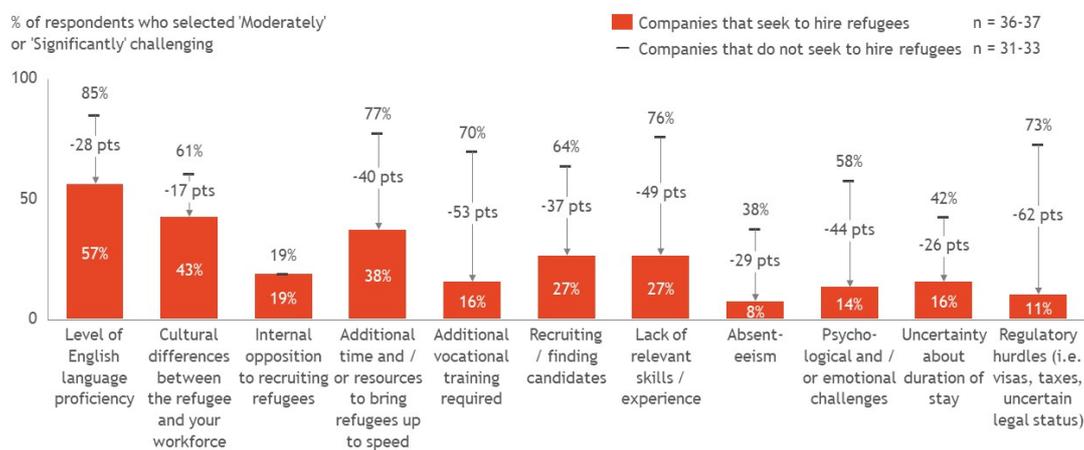
**Temporary visas and work permits:** One employer identified temporary or bridging visas as deterrents that discouraged employers from investing in onboarding without knowing whether an employee could stay on the job.

## Perceived obstacles for hiring and working with refugees

Employers participating in the online survey and the employers participating in the interviews were asked to identify challenging factors in employing refugees.

Figure 4

How challenging have these factors been in employing refugees / would you expect to be (if company has not sought to hire refugees)?



Survey questions asked of all companies.

**English language proficiency was considered a challenge by most employers:** Insufficient English language proficiency was the most common challenge identified by all survey respondents who actively sought to hire refugees (57%) and employers who did not seek to

hire refugees (85%). Coinciding with the survey responses, interviewed employers consistently identified the lack of English language skills in technical and day-to-day vocabulary as a challenge. One interviewee said, “You can’t just take someone on and expect them to understand the language, the business language. That can take a bit.”

**Cultural differences between the refugee and the workforce:** ‘Cultural differences between the refugee and your workforce’ was the second most selected challenge (43%) by survey respondents who actively sought to hire refugees. Matching this sentiment, several interviewed employers discussed challenges affecting refugees’ workplace readiness, ranging from understanding nuances in the “Australian way of doing things” like customer service, to adapting to cultural expectations like use of eye contact, showing initiative and being confident to voice opinions.

**Lack of Australian work experience:** Lack of local experience was also widely mentioned. A few interviewees remarked that ways of doing business within an industry or responsibilities within a job role can differ from country to country. One interviewee noted that not being familiar with how a specific industry works in Australia could hamper the ability of refugees to, “...understand why customers want what they want, even if they worked in the same industry in their home country.”

**Additional time and/or resources to bring refugees up to speed:** One of the most common challenges for survey respondents and interviewees was the need to invest additional time and resources. Interviewees elaborated on the challenge of training refugees to become job-ready, “...anyone I hire from the street [...], they have a three-month [training] program.” The same interviewee noted a longer integration time for refugees, “...it nearly took me 12 months to onboard them fully.” Examples of how employers altered training for refugees in comparison to local hires included extra training to help refugees gain proficiency in the software needed for a role, and training about industry knowledge to function in the role such as client cycles, industry jargon and concepts.

**Difficulty finding refugees:** Most employers interviewed relied on service providers to identify refugee candidates. One interviewee noted, “If I did not have a partnership with [service providers] then hiring refugees would be a significant challenge.”

**Internal opposition to recruiting refugees:** Although “internal opposition to recruiting refugees” was not one of the most selected challenges by survey respondents, “fear, prejudice and unconscious biases” were mentioned often during interviews. Some interviewees found it challenging to convince hiring managers to consider someone with experience they did not recognise and could not easily validate.

**Views on regulatory hurdles:** Seventy-three percent (73%) of employers that have not actively sought to hire refugees considered regulatory hurdles a challenge, compared to 11% of employers that actively sought to hire refugees. It could be that views on challenges such as visas, taxes and uncertain legal status were influenced by an employer’s practical experience with hiring refugees. Beyond being a potential deterrent, interviewees shared that uncertainties around temporary visas and work permits could burden refugees as well as employers. One interviewee brought up the anxiety and stress that came with “...the fear of at any moment no longer being able to stay here and being sent back somewhere.”

**Unrealistic expectations from the team:** One interviewee mentioned the importance of ensuring that the team did not set unrealistic expectations and was prepared to put in the extra effort for training to successfully integrate refugee hires.

**Accusation of discriminatory recruitment practices:** One interviewee mentioned being accused of discriminatory hiring practices by an unsuccessful candidate and by others who were not part of the recruitment process.



**Insight:** Service providers, NGOs and social enterprises, appear to be crucial to recruitment, selecting the right refugee for a role, and providing ongoing training and workplace integration support to both refugees and employers.

## Employer perceptions on common misconceptions about hiring and working with refugees

Employers were asked to share common (mis)understandings about hiring and working with refugees.

**(Mis)conception that refugees are unskilled:** Some interviewees felt that there was a misunderstanding among the general population about the skills that refugees bring. One interviewee spoke of the perception that “Australia has a lot of unskilled asylum seekers and refugees.” Several employers interviewed saw the opposite, describing refugees they had hired for STEM<sup>3</sup> positions as “extremely qualified.”

**(Mis)conception that integration is going to be too hard:** Many interviewees elaborated on the challenges in hiring refugees, with some pointing to “cultural and communication differences” and “lack of job-readiness” as barriers to hiring refugees. Feedback from interviewees showed that working with a service provider, preparing refugee candidates for the Australian labour market, and supporting both refugees and employers in the hiring process could mitigate many of the challenges.

**(Mis)conception that refugees are taking the jobs of the local population:** Some employers who actively seek to hire refugees mentioned the impact of public opinion that “refugees taking our jobs,” which seemed to be amplified by the media and geo-political environment. In contrast to this negative view, a number of interviewees who were hiring for mostly low-skilled positions saw the refugee talent pool as a solution to filling vacancies that they struggled to fill with the local workforce.

**(Mis)conception that refugees have job opportunities handed out to them:** One interviewee mentioned a perceived public opinion that refugees are getting jobs handed to them without merit. Multiple interviewees reported a different reality, asserting that refugees were hired because of their skills and qualifications. A few interviewees raised the challenges that refugees face in selling themselves and demonstrating their skills.

**(Mis)conception that English proficiency is a challenge for all refugees:** Multiple interviewees noted hiring managers being hesitant to hire refugees due to concerns about being unable to communicate in English. Not all refugee recruits were reported to lack English language proficiency. An interviewee hiring skilled refugees mentioned that 25% of the organisation’s refugee hires had worked in international organisations run by western companies and had English language levels that were “quite often better than the assumptions.”

**(Mis)conception that refugees do not want to work:** One interviewee commented on the general misconception that refugees are unemployed due to a lack of desire to work. When hiring for skilled positions, the interviewee spoke of the challenges of qualification recognition, transferable skills and navigating the Australian recruitment process. They said, “They’re [refugees] competing against people who have worked in Australia [...] And then you see the negative rhetoric about refugees not wanting to work, and not wanting to do anything. And it’s completely the opposite. They’re trying really hard, and we have created these barriers.”

**(Mis)conception that it is not okay to get to know a refugee’s history and background:** One interviewee brought up how “the Australian society is cautious not to tread into areas that might make someone feel uncomfortable.” However, multiple employers participating in the interviews encouraged stories to be shared. One interviewee found that refugees were often willing to share their story, and said sharing information helped with the overall process of teambuilding and “getting to know someone and understand them as a person.”

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<sup>3</sup> STEM stands for science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

# Motivators and effective incentives for hiring and retaining refugees

## Summary

To advance refugee employment, it takes convincing business leadership.

The successful hiring and retention of refugees requires a long-term, holistic approach, involving all levels of management, the support of influential staff members, and the engagement of peers and supervisors. Employers identified corporate social responsibility (CSR) and leadership vision as key motivators for refugee hiring initiatives. Understanding the hardship experienced by refugees was important for empathy and engagement.

Employers with experience hiring refugees said the most important type of support was assistance in identifying the right refugee candidate for a particular role.

Government funding and wage subsidies were not a motivating factor for most employers. In certain industries, such as construction, social procurement was reportedly highly effective in creating scalable employment opportunities for refugees.

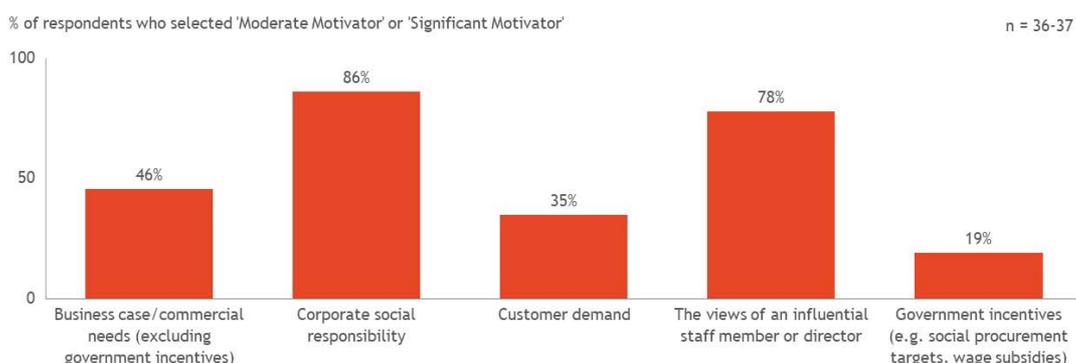
## Reported motivators for hiring refugees

Employers participating in the online survey were asked which factors motivated them to hire refugees and how long they had been employing refugees. Employers participating in the in-depth interviews were also asked to identify the circumstances that prompted them to hire refugees and whether their motivation changed over time.

CSR and the influence of someone in a leadership position were the predominant motivating factors for both survey respondents and interviewees. Interviewees said that hiring refugees appeared to be most effective when the views of leadership were supported by corporate mandate and policy. Interviewees also suggested that business drivers, such as the ability to improve services or attract business, could influence CSR decisions.

Figure 5

To what extent have the following motivated your company to seek to employ refugees?



Survey questions only asked of companies that have actively sought to hire refugees

**Helping vulnerable job seekers into jobs:** The inclusion of vulnerable job seekers was part of the corporate mission for some interviewees. In the financial sector in particular, multiple employers said that economic inclusion and the financial wellbeing of refugees were part of their corporate mission, and that employment was the first step in achieving financial inclusion. Measurements of success ranged from placement within the company itself, to equipping refugees with local work experience to pursue further employment, which was considered crucial to achieve meaningful and sustainable employment.

**Commitment by organisational leadership:** Survey respondents and interviewees often mentioned that the views of individuals in leadership positions within the organisation were a driving force for refugee-hiring initiatives. Incorporating refugee inclusion into corporate hiring

policies was important for support across the organisation. One interviewee noted, "...at any stage if I faced opposition...I would just refer them back to the project director's mandate...". Change in leadership had an impact on an organisation's level of commitment too. One interviewee stated that, "As leadership changes over time, commitments and initial vigilance have diluted...".

**Reflecting the diversity of the community in the workforce:** Most interviewees expressed the desire for their workforce to represent the communities in which they operate. Some interviewees considered it "...a moral obligation on Australia to provide those [employment] opportunities."

**Self-reward:** Interviewees, regardless of their job role, identified the notion of having a positive impact on the wellbeing of others as a driver for being involved in refugee employment initiatives.

**Alleviating labour shortages:** Some interviewees saw the refugee talent pool as a solution to filling vacancies in low-skilled jobs that they were struggling to fill through the local workforce. An employer who was struggling to fill skilled vacancies due to uncompetitive compensation also looked to refugees as an alternative talent pool, which could signal exploitative practices.

**Fulfilling diversity quotas that are self-imposed or imposed by third parties:** A few interviewees mentioned setting self-imposed diversity targets (for refugees or underrepresented job seekers) due to government tenders stating a preference for doing business with companies that are committed to diversity, or due to contractual commitments with contractors who require workforce diversity from their subcontractors.

**Attracting business and improving services:** Business needs and the impact of diversity on brand often drove decisions on CSR. Having a diverse workforce that reflected the community in which the organisation operated was identified as revenue and marketing drivers by one interviewee. Another business recognised emerging communities within its customer base and said hiring refugees was important to provide services to refugee communities in their own language and culture.

**Driving innovation:** Some interviewees found that refugee recruitment helped them to tap into a highly skilled talent pool. Diverse perspectives within an organisation were identified as important business tools for innovation and productivity. One interviewee noted that living through challenging circumstances meant that refugees brought problem-solving skills to their roles. Another employer noted that a diverse workforce has helped their organisation see new perspectives and "...deliver better culturally-appropriate services."

**Refugee work ethic:** Interviewees described refugee employees as eager-to-learn, hardworking, committed and loyal. Some employers found employee turnover was lower among refugees than the industry standard.

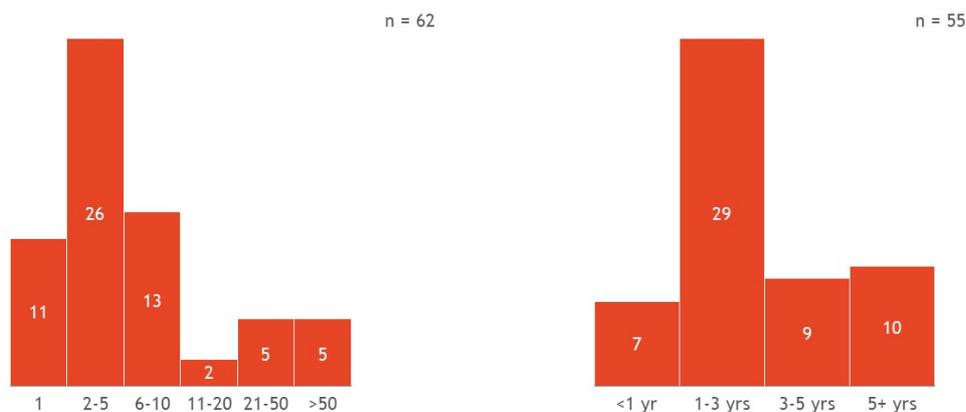
## Period of engagement with the refugee workforce

Most employers surveyed had hired a number of refugees over several years. Most had hired between two and five refugees over the past five years, while the majority of employers have been hiring refugees for one-to-three years.

Figure 6

Approximately how many refugees has your company hired in Australia in the past 5 years?

Over what period of time has your company specifically sought to employ refugees?



Survey questions asked of all companies

## Circumstances prompting engagement with the refugee workforce

Employers participating in the in-depth interviews were asked when they started hiring refugees and why.

**Outreach efforts from service providers:** A few employers mentioned attending a service provider event about their employment program for refugees and asylum seekers and feeling "...really inspired and wanted to do something to help."

**Exposure to barriers in refugee employment:** Two interviewees who volunteered for a refugee employment initiative felt personally compelled to actively seek to hire refugees. Two employers mentioned that someone at their company in a leadership position had met someone from a community centre that serviced refugees which triggered the interest to hire refugees.

**Political backing:** Two interviewees noted the influence of elected officials on driving refugee employment initiatives in their organisation. "The driver was initially a personal thing...but then once the Ministers picked it up and launched it..."

**Self-imposed social procurement targets:** One interviewee said their company had introduced self-imposed targets for hiring refugees after a corporate commitment to help the Australian Government settle refugees.

**Government's encouragement:** One interviewee recognised the Government's priority of settling refugees. They introduced self-imposed social procurement targets and included hiring a diverse workforce in how it presented itself and did business.

## Does motivation change over time?

Employers interviewed were asked if the motivation to hire refugees had changed over time.

**Leadership commitment and staff buy-in:** Multiple interviewees spoke of the importance of leadership commitment. One interviewee commented, "...as much as we linked it to a very specific business strategy...a very strong senior leader view had a big impact as well." A few interviewees shared how a lack of commitment from new leadership could filter down to managers, resulting in less of a commitment to hiring refugees: "...some performance issues [were] raised by managers who felt they could no longer tolerate the addition of work that was required to upskill some of our refugees."

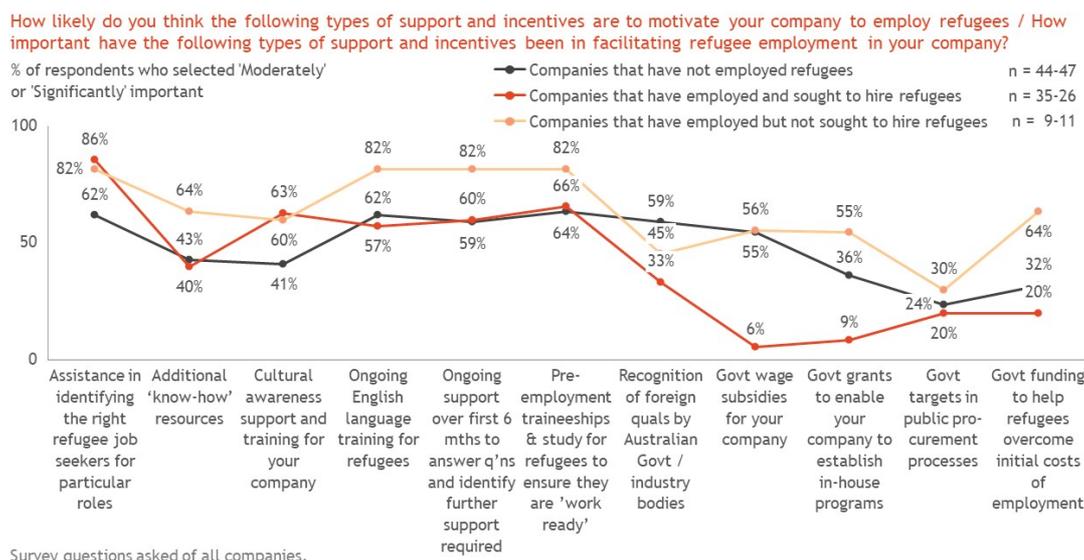
**Changes in corporate environments:** An employer undergoing a merger saw "...less appetite

among the staff to consider refugees” in a situation of understaffed teams. Another employer facing job cuts and more pressure on staff to perform noted, “People definitely see the benefits of it and so forth, but it's still...the environment that we're in at the moment; it's not an easy task...”

## Employer views on support and incentives

Employers were asked to identify the importance of several types of support and incentives that could facilitate refugee employment within their organisations.

Figure 7



### Identifying the right refugee job seekers for particular roles (e.g. skill matching)

**Pre-screening and skill matching:** Assistance in identifying the right refugee for the job was the most important support for online survey respondents who were actively seeking to hire refugees. This sentiment was echoed by almost all employers interviewed.”

**The role of service providers in skill matching:** Most interviewees depended heavily on service providers for finding refugee candidates, their pre-screening and referrals. One interviewee said, “Having that skill matching process and that personalised ability...to do such in depth screening, and then coaching for that candidate to be job ready, is probably key to the success of the outcome.”

**Skills matching of less importance when hiring refugees for low-skilled roles:** One interviewed employer who found skills matching of less importance said, “...we're able to take unskilled workers pretty much in all different backgrounds and walks of life, it doesn't really matter too much.... They've just got to pass the medical.”

### Additional 'know-how' resources (e.g. refugee employment guide)

**Employment guides about hiring refugees are helpful:** Overall, interviewees who were seeking to hire refugees found that employment guides about hiring refugees were helpful.

**Lack of awareness about employing refugees among small businesses:** A small business interviewee commented that more effort was needed to create awareness among small businesses of the need for employment among refugees, the benefits to the employer, and the support available. The interviewee said “I probably wouldn't be aware of refugees or the fact that they need work” without meeting someone from a community centre. The interviewee noted further that, “Workshops and seminars are time consuming, not attractive. Time is better spent to increase awareness and engagement through links to local business community groups or employer or professional groups.”

**A range of channels for small businesses to access information:** Another interviewee noted that “...for smaller companies that are time-poor, but are required to fulfil a social quota, a manual might not be the best approach. The government should offer a range of approaches or delivery methods, such as e-learning as a training tool...”

### Cultural awareness support and training for a company

**Cultural training for supervisors:** Several interviewees provide cultural training in conjunction with service providers to educate supervisors on refugee backgrounds and experiences, cultural nuances in communication and best ways to support refugees.

**Training about trauma:** In addition to cultural awareness training, a few interviewees mentioned their efforts to educate their staff on dealing with employees who have gone through a traumatic experience.

### Ongoing English language training for refugees

**English training customised per industry:** A few employers mentioned the need for English training beyond “classroom English,” stating that the “real” English challenge is in relation to the industry or on-the-job English.

**Work schedule as a barrier for on-the-job English training:** Ongoing English training for refugees with low literacy or low language proficiency deemed useful, however one interviewee explained how on-the-job language training might affect working hours and hence might not be seen as optimal by either the organisation or the refugee.

**Pre-screening and English training:** One of the employers interviewed had English-level requirements built into its refugee candidate-screening process and noted English training to be less relevant.

**English skills for low-skilled, difficult-to-fill vacancies:** Two interviewees discussed their willingness to hire refugees with little or no English-language proficiency to fill certain vacancies. These employers relied on translators, English training through a community centre, or translation efforts from other refugees on staff to communicate.

**English as part of the pathway to higher level positions:** One interviewee noted that English training could help some of their refugee hires obtain the proficiency they need to be considered for higher level positions.

### Pre-employment traineeships and study for refugees to help them be work ready

**Pre-employment training:** Survey respondents who were actively seeking to hire refugees found pre-employment training was the most important type of support. For most interviewees, pre-employment training was a hiring condition to help refugee hires become familiar with their workplace expectations and social norms.

**Funding for targeted pre-employment training:** A few interviewees spoke of the need for pre-employment training targeted to specific roles. One interviewee stated, “...a lot of money...gets spent on preparing people for general employment that could be directed to more specific training....all the training needs to be linked to a real job, and not training for training's sake.”

### Recognition of foreign qualifications by Australian government and industry bodies

**Foreign credentials recognition typically not critical:** Interviewees worked around the lack of recognised foreign credentials. One employer hiring engineers stated, “...if we employed an engineer that didn't have a degree recognised in Australia, we wouldn't put that engineer into a senior engineering role anyway because, obviously, there's no Australian experience.”

### Government wage subsidies for a company

**Little interest in wage subsidies among employers seeking to hire refugees:** Wage subsidies were the lowest-rated incentive among survey respondents who actively sought to hire refugees. Several employers interviewed noted that they would not use wage subsidies as refugees who were eligible were often not job ready.

**Wage subsidies not worth the administrative burden:** Some interviewees said wage subsidies did not have a “huge” impact on reducing their cost to hire, and that the amounts were not worth the administration cost. One interviewee said, “The ability for us to go through the motions to actually claim that probably costs as much as what we get back.” This sentiment was echoed by another employer, “...the paperwork needed to access wage subsidies makes it less attractive.”

**Wage subsidies compromise the system:** One interviewee noted the importance of keeping the focus on the best fit for the role, with wage subsidy eligibility as a bonus. “You want to be looking for the best person, not the best person with funds.” Another interviewee expressed concerns about wage subsidy misuse, with employers laying off refugees at the end of the subsidy. “Some companies...they're just in it for the subsidy. And I think that should not be encouraged...” One interviewee admitted to using subsidies as screening criteria, substantiating the view of another interviewee who feared that wage subsidies “...send the wrong signal and the wrong motivation...instead the money can be better spent to support service providers.”

**Wage subsidies likely more attractive for small businesses:** One small business feared it was not financially viable to hire refugees without the required support and training, and some wage subsidy. Another small business that was accessing wage subsidies also reiterated their importance. One large employer did not need wage subsidies to hire, with the interviewee commenting that taking money from the government, “...would be hard for us to justify.”

### Government grants to establish in-house programs

**Government grants for in-house programs of little interest:** Government grants for companies to establish in-house programs were considered of little importance for survey respondents and interviewees. Only two interviewees with an existing in-house program found it was of interest. Small companies said they did not have the capacity to develop in-house programs.

**Requirements for government grants:** One interviewee with an in-house refugee program, who believed grants were beneficial, expressed concern about potential program requirements (e.g. conditions, such as hiring 50% men and 50% women). The employer was also apprehensive about being required to accept limitations, such as age, that may disqualify the refugees they currently employ.

**Grants to manage refugee-hiring programs:** One interviewee with an in-house refugee-hiring program was interested in a systemic solution that would allow a long-term approach. This employer expressed interest in government assistance to help companies bring on more staff to increase refugee uptake.

### Government targets in public procurement processes

**Social procurement targets in certain industries:** Social procurement targets could be a tool to enforce behaviour. Two interviewees discussed how their industry has been affected by government tenders that stated a preference to do business with companies with a diverse workforce.

**Risks and responsibilities of social procurement targets:** One interviewee noted that the government needed to recognise that social quotas affect costs and companies' bottom lines. “...If you're looking at industry-wide then yes, a government policy or a target is always beneficial, but there does also need to be recognition that if you put in another policy that it does add an additional cost onto the project...”

**Social procurement targets as a barrier:** Social procurement targets could be a barrier to refugees despite their skills and experience. One interviewee shared that a skilled refugee candidate was dropped as a contender for a position because the company had an obligation to achieve a hiring quota from a population group that the refugee applicant did not belong to.

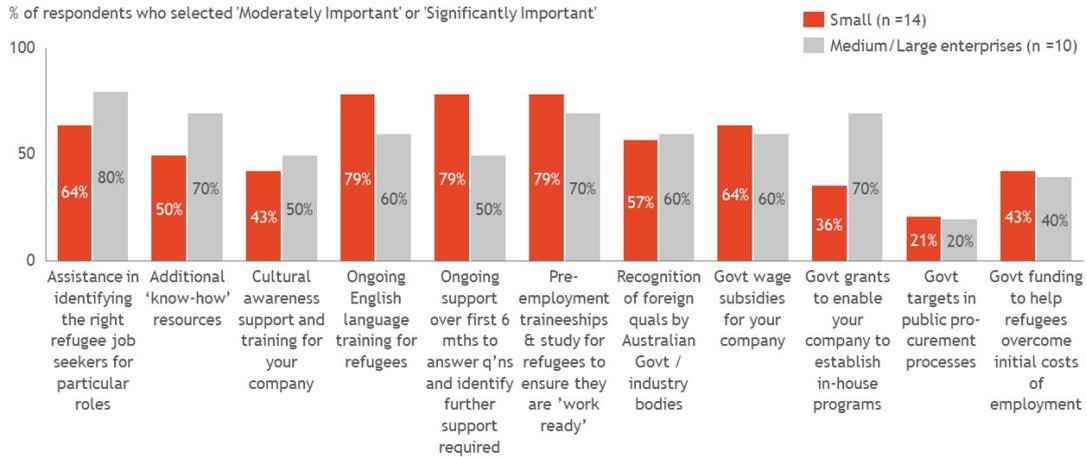
### Government funding to help refugees overcome initial costs of employment (e.g. transport, clothing/footwear)

**Government grants for helping refugees cover initial employment costs:** Interviewees said that government grants to help refugees cover the costs of finding employment were helpful, although multiple interviewees mentioned this type of funding was best managed by the service provider they work with.

When comparing employer views on support and incentives based on company size, survey respondents said that small enterprises would value ongoing language training, ongoing support and pre-employment traineeships significantly more than other enterprises. This finding reflects the feedback from in-depth the interviews.

Figure 8

How likely do you think the following types of support and incentives are to motivate your company to employ refugees / How important have the following types of support and incentives been in facilitating refugee employment in your company?



N is lower because only companies that indicated their number of employees and had not sought to hire refugees were included in the analysis

### Views on engaging peers within the industry to hire refugees

Employers interviewed were asked to suggest methods for encouraging their peers to hire refugees, and mentioned several ways to raise awareness and share stories from companies that have hired refugees successfully over the longer term.

**Sharing refugee-placement success stories:** An interviewee suggested "...encouraging CEOs to tell their success stories to other CEOs."

**Using existing professional networks to create awareness:** One interviewee suggested educating and promoting the hiring of refugees among groups like HR networks.

**Working with alternative groups already plugged into the industry:** A small business interviewee noted the lack of awareness among small businesses and suggested, "...working with employer organisations on the ground (like Australian Industry Group or Chamber of Commerce), which have offices in regional centres and staff on the ground who know the employers, are already running funding program programs and delivering programs and have the local networks with employers on the ground."

# Effective recruitment, integration and retention strategies used by employers

## Summary

Successful hiring of refugees typically requires tailoring the employer's mainstream recruitment and onboarding processes.

Employers said identifying the right candidate was a crucial part of the recruitment process. Preparation and ongoing training of both staff and refugees were important for successful integration and retention. Industry-specific training (e.g. English language skills, technical skills) was also flagged by employers as an important component of successful integration. As part of the onboarding process, employers typically used training or internship programs to help refugees gain the skills needed to secure and sustain employment.

Employers who were interviewed, and who identified additional costs in hiring refugees for skilled positions, perceived cost benefits in working with specialised service providers as opposed to hiring via traditional routes such as labour hire firms.

Most interviewees found the retention rate among refugees was higher than for other groups.

## Recruitment strategies

Employers who were interviewed were asked to elaborate on the processes they used to recruit and select refugees.

Service providers played a significant role in helping employers to identify the right refugee candidate.



**Insight:** Internships or trainee programs are used widely by employers to reduce hiring risks. However, when refugees are in trainee positions for extended periods, such as a year or longer, it puts them into a prolonged stage of uncertainty and further marginalises them.

## Methods for seeking refugees

Employers saw identifying the right candidate as an important part of the recruitment process. Consequently, employers tended to dedicate time and resources to hire the right candidates and mitigate the risks and cost of hiring candidates that were not a good fit. Most employers interviewed received refugee referrals through service providers, but a few other methods were also identified.

**Service providers:** Most interviewees sourced refugee hires through service providers that were running programs to connect refugees to employment. The role of the service providers was mostly to:

- understand the employer's business needs;
- understand the requirements for the roles;
- provide pre-employment training on workplace culture and job-related aspects; and
- pre-screen and refer refugee applicants.

**Community centres:** Some interviewees mentioned working with community centres to source pre-screened refugee job applicants.

**Word of mouth:** Some interviewees mentioned getting referrals of refugees looking for employment through refugees already on staff.

**Networking:** To a lesser extent, interviewees also mentioned sourcing refugees through networking efforts at career expos, with multicultural organisations, churches and local

community groups.

**Private companies:** One interviewee mentioned working with a consulting company that pre-screened refugee candidates obtained through service providers as part of a government-funded program.

### Best practices adopted by employers to achieve success and mitigate hiring risks

Interviewees were asked to share methods they had used to overcome challenges when recruiting refugees. Methods used include:

- A. Collaborating with organisations that specialise in job or skill-matching to find the right candidate with the skills, motivation, and interest to do the job;
- B. Considering fit, in addition to skills, to assess if the refugee will like the work and fit into the workplace;
- C. Having initiatives and employees on staff responsible for job or skill matching success;
- D. Removing or addressing barriers that hinder refugees from being considered for a job;
- E. Taking measures to help refugees acquire the Australian experience needed to better function in the job;
- F. Addressing language proficiency through pre-screening and/or training; and
- G. Mitigating risks of making a bad hire.

- A. Collaborating with organisations that specialise in job or skill matching to find the right candidate with the skills, motivation, and interest to do the job

#### **Working with referral agencies vested in sustainable and meaningful employment:**

Several interviewees found that good referrals began with refugee candidates who were motivated to work and had an interest in the industry. Referral agencies that put in the time to understand what the work entailed, and were vested in long-term outcomes for the refugees, tended to provide good referrals.

**Allocating time and resources to job or skill matching success:** Multiple interviewees discussed the effort that went into making sure job requirements were understood and relayed back to the service providers and internal staff in charge of screening refugee candidates. A few interviewees mentioned working with hiring managers to understand the job requirements. One interviewee talked about the importance of understanding the refugee candidate's skills in comparison to the basic skills needed to function in the job to increase the chances of a successful placement and avoid termination down the line.

- B. Considering fit in addition to skills

**Understanding specific needs during the recruitment phase:** To increase sustainable, and successful employment, one interviewee noted that, during the interview process, their diversity and inclusion staff made an effort to understand the refugee candidate's cultural and family circumstances to anticipate accommodations that could be needed. As part of the interview process, the diversity and inclusion staff also considered if the role could be flexible to accommodate those needs, and they also identified teams likely to be supportive to the refugee candidate.

**Using work shadowing to help the candidate understand the work:** To help set up a successful placement, one employer used shadowing sessions in their recruiting process to help align the refugees' expectations with what the job would be like.

- C. Having initiatives and employees on staff responsible for job- or skill-matching success

**Programs and staff dedicated to refugee recruitment:** Recognising diversity and inclusion as a corporate mandate, some interviewees from larger employers had designed in-house programs and hired dedicated staff to manage the recruitment, integration and retention of vulnerable job seekers, such as persons with disabilities, people who are chronically unemployed, refugees, and other groups.

- D. Removing or addressing barriers that stop refugees from being considered for a job

**Structured hiring practices to overcome the "regular" hiring process:** A few interviewees found that having a structured hiring process geared towards hiring refugees made it easier to avoid refugees being screened out in a "regular" hiring process because of qualification requirements or unconscious biases. One interviewee commented,

“...if we have a specific process for [refugees]...what we find is that once they get to the interview, they're amazing, but they just don't get to the interview...”.

**Flexibility in screening criteria:** Interviewees realised that easy and timely access to pre-employment checks, such as certificates of qualification or references, were often not realistic expectations for the circumstances of refugees. Many employers were working with hiring managers to revisit screening criteria and identify where there was room for flexibility. One interviewee noted, “We have got a very, very, very structured risk process in terms of hiring people. And it's not very flexible ...we need to revisit that, if we're going to hire people from countries where they're in war zones and you can't actually get to the university to get the physical qualification...”.

- E. Taking measures to help refugees acquire the Australian experience needed to better function in the job

**Integration of internship or trainee programs into hiring practices:** Some interviewees recognised that local experience was a challenge for refugee integration and productivity within the workplace, and had included internships or trainee programs in their hiring process before full-time hiring. These internships or trainee programs were typically managed in collaboration with a service provider. In some instances, refugee hires worked several months, or up to a year or longer, before being hired into permanent positions. While this helped to ensure job readiness, it put refugee hires into a prolonged stage of uncertainty.

- F. Addressing language proficiency through pre-screening and/or training

**Addressing language requirements in the recruitment process:** Some interviewees worked with service providers or other third parties to screen refugee candidates for the language skills to function in customer service roles. The desired level of English proficiency was part of their job readiness criteria, making post-employment English training less relevant for these employers. One of the interviewees worked with a referral organisation to incorporate language training into their refugee job readiness training program.

- G. Mitigating risks of making a bad hire

**Hiring trainees on secondment or through labour hire companies:** A few interviewees mentioned hiring refugees who were still in training to avoid the risk of placing a potential bad hire on the payroll. Recruited trainees were paid by the partnering service provider or referred to a labour hire company that would take the refugee hires on their payroll on behalf of the employer, with the intention of eventually moving job-ready trainees into permanent positions. One interviewee commented, “It's a good balance of a three-month secondment, so then it's like giving them the local experience, but no real obligation to hire, so it's less risk.”

## Pathways to employment

Employers who took part in the in-depth interviews were asked if they offered pathways to employment for refugees.

**Apprenticeship and internships to help refugees secure employment:** Most interviewees hired refugees through a training or internship program. These programs enabled employers to train refugees and equip them with the relevant skills and experience needed to gain permanent employment within the organisation, or gain much-needed Australian experience to secure employment elsewhere. Beyond on-the-job experience, some training programs also included employment workshops and coaching on resume writing and interviewing.

**Career growth in sectors grappling with employee churn:** An interviewee hiring for low-skilled positions prioritised resources to reduce employee churn as a business priority. The employer was located in a regional area and operating in a sector where filling vacancies with the local workforce was a challenge. Rather than building skills for career growth, the employer used resources as general support to help refugee employees settle in the community, with the objective of helping the refugees to integrate in the community and stay in the job. One interviewee mentioned, “...we organise rental, we pay the board, the rent...so we call [it a] soft landing to make sure that they're here, they're settling well...”.

## Workplace integration strategies

### Perceived challenges of integrating refugees into the workplace

Employers who took part in the in-depth interviews were asked to identify the challenges they faced integrating refugees into their workplace.

**Facilitating communication among staff and refugees:** Several interviewees expected staff and new refugee hires to be aware of how culture affects how people communicate.

Employers also expected a level of English language proficiency from refugee hires. At the same time, they expected their staff to adjust when English was not someone's first language.

**Creating cultural awareness among staff and refugees:** Interviewees expected staff to be aware of differences in workplace cultures to better understand and manage refugees.

Employers also expected refugees to understand norms and expectations within Australian workplace culture.

**Getting refugees job or workplace ready:** Employers expected refugees to have the basic role-related knowledge to start functioning in the job.

**Helping refugees feel included:** Employers identified feeling included as an important aspect of helping refugees integrate into the workplace.

**Creating training and coaching capabilities among staff to integrate refugees:** Employers tasked their supervisors and team leaders with training, coaching and providing support to help refugees build confidence and settle into their new roles and workplace.

### Important factors for integration of refugees into the workplace

Employers participating in the in-depth interviews shared their best practices for successfully integrating refugees into the workplace:

- A. Creating a workplace conducive to integration;
- B. Preparing and training staff; and
- C. Providing training and support for refugees.

#### A. Creating a workplace conducive to integration

Multiple interviewees made efforts to adjust their workplace to facilitate the integration of refugees. Based on employer feedback, the following best practices created workplaces that were conducive to refugee integration:

**Staff, programs and/or procedures to integrate refugees into the workplace:** Some interviewees had staff, programs and/or procedures in place for making sure refugees were settled into their roles. Staff responsibilities ranged from maintaining contact with the refugee and the supervisor, to making sure refugees felt included into the team. Most interviewees had procedures to onboard and integrate refugees.

**Mentorship programs or buddy systems:** A few interviewees had mentorship programs or buddy systems to provide refugees with "someone safe" within the workplace. The mentor or buddy was not the refugee's direct manager and was someone they could feel comfortable asking questions. One interviewee had a mentorship program that connected refugees to senior staff who could provide advice and help refugees advance their careers within the organisation.

**Opportunities for socialising and networking:** Multiple interviewees held company events and activities to provide opportunities for employees to interact with each other, build networks and share stories. One interviewee mentioned providing opportunities for refugees to network with other refugees in the same field to share experiences and challenges, and learn from each other.

**Workplace culture of inclusion:** Some interviewees made efforts to build awareness and support among staff of the positive impact they could have on the lives of the refugees they work with by making them feel part of the team. One interviewee noted, "Inclusion is important; making refugees feel they are part of the team, as opposed to part of a project."

**Making the use of English in the workplace compulsory:** To improve English language proficiency among refugees and encourage team building, one interviewee said that, in addition to providing English classes, the use of English in the workplace was a

requirement during working hours.

B. Preparing and training the staff

Several interviewees discussed how they prepared their staff to integrate refugees into their workplace.

**Leadership training and engagement:** A few interviewees provided their supervisors with information on the background of the refugees hired, along with tactics for coaching and providing feedback and support. Some interviewees mentioned the supervisor's role in helping new refugee hires to build confidence in their new roles and workplace, and in creating opportunities for the team to get to know each other's cultures and overcome biases. One interviewee with a 12-month training program for refugee hires spent as much time preparing staff as they spent preparing new hires to work together. "I would absolutely say the key to success is really the education and the engagement with our managers."

**Staff training on cultural awareness:** A few interviewees mentioned training their supervisors and staff to be aware of differences in workplace cultures, and worked to make sure their team was equipped to manage and address matters such as saying yes without understanding, showing initiative or speaking up. Some interviewees mentioned educating their staff on accommodating religious observance, and being mindful of sensitivities and tensions among certain refugee cohorts.

**Staff training on communication and language:** Some interviewees provided training to their staff to prepare them for nuances in communications and on how culture can affect how someone communicates or interprets situations. A few interviewees aimed to alleviate language barriers by encouraging staff to "explain things more broadly", and making their staff mindful of industry jargons and acronyms.

**Setting realistic expectations for training and productivity:** A few interviewees mentioned the importance of setting realistic expectations with supervisors for the expected productivity of refugees.

**Staff education around trauma:** One interviewee provided training to their staff on how to relate to people who have gone through a traumatic experience.

C. Providing training and support for refugees

Employers who took part in the in-depth interviews discussed how they prepared refugees for their workplace.

**Language training:** A few interviewees relied on service providers to provide ongoing English training to help refugees improve their language skills, including business language and business writing skills.

**Cultural training for refugees:** A few interviewees collaborated with service providers to provide cultural training to help refugees understand matters such as punctuality, customer service expectations, eye contact and female leadership.

**Support to understand Australian work requirements:** A few interviewees provided support for refugee hires to understand work matters such as contracts, wages, their rights as an employee in Australia, and adhering to safety regulations.

**Integration challenges that remained difficult**

While employers successfully mitigated many challenges for integration some remained difficult to address.

**Communication issues that are mistaken for productivity issues:** A few interviewees mentioned needing to intervene to resolve communication issues that looked like productivity issues. In one example given, the staff assumed a new refugee hire did not want to contribute in meetings, while the refugee was unable to provide input due to language barriers.

**Resistance in organisations that are understaffed or operate in high-pressure environments:** A few interviewees spoke of the challenges of getting support and cooperation from staff who were asked to support new hire refugees. This was especially prevalent if staff were under pressure themselves, due to understaffing or a high-stress/high-pressure environment.

**Resistance to a diverse workforce:** One interviewee discussed the challenge of countering

biases in the workplace in “a fairly conservative regional centre,” where some staff members could be unaccepting of ethnically diverse co-workers.

**Accommodation of religious beliefs:** One interviewee shared how supervisors struggled to balance accommodating for prayer time in the workplace.

## Retention rates and strategies

### Retention rates of refugee hires

Employers who took part in the in-depth interviews were asked about retention rates. Most interviewees found that the retention rate among refugees was higher than other groups.

**Loyalty:** Refugees felt loyalty towards the employer that gave them their first opportunity; which contributed to higher retention.

**Desire to succeed:** Refugees were keen to succeed in the job they had, instead of looking for the next opportunity.

### Strategies to retain refugees in the workforce

Employers who took part in the in-depth interviews were asked to discuss the actions they took to retain refugee employees.

**Preparing and training refugees and staff:** Multiple employers put in the effort to prepare and/or train both refugees and their staff, resulting in higher retention.

**Showing flexibility for career pathways:** A few interviewees, with larger employers, found that when an initial role was not a fit, having the flexibility and understanding to identifying better suitable roles, positively impacted retention.

**Creating inclusive and supportive workplaces:** A few interviewees noted that helping refugee hires feel supported and included within the team positively impacted retention.

## Perceptions of productivity

### Perceived advantages of hiring refugees

Employers who took part in the in-depth interviews were asked what they found to be the greatest advantages of hiring refugees. Employers who were surveyed were asked to identify the benefits of hiring refugees.

According to interviewees, the greatest advantages of hiring refugees were:

- Giving staff a sense of satisfaction for “helping someone blossom in their profession;”
- Improving customer service from serving communities in their own language and culture;
- Having hard working and loyal employees with less churn than other groups;
- Experiencing more diversity in business perspectives and schools of thought; and
- Building rapport with refugee communities and attracting more employees.



**Insight:** For most interviewees, the greatest reported advantage of hiring refugees was the sense of purpose and self-reward the staff felt for being able to do something good for someone.

### Perceived productivity of refugees

Over 85% of surveyed employers declared that their refugee employees were as productive or more productive than the rest of their workforce.

Employers who took part in the in-depth interviews were asked how they experienced the productivity of refugees compared to their expectations and compared to other groups.

### Perceived productivity of refugees compared to expectations

**Productivity during apprenticeship or internship periods:** Most interviewees provided a training period for refugee hires in which the refugee trainees were expected to be less

productive than permanent hires.

**Learning curve for refugees:** Multiple interviewees noted that the learning curve was longer for refugees. Needing to communicate in English as a second language affected the learning curve, as did the time needed to get used to the workplace, learn a new technology or learn about a new industry.

**Issues with skills or job matching:** Multiple interviewees found that the productivity of refugees was equal to other groups, and equal to employer expectations, after they completed their training. Productivity tended to be lower than expected when refugees were placed in roles that were not a good match for their skills, experience or abilities.

**Lack of job readiness and English proficiency:** One interviewee who was hiring refugees without the support of a service provider said that “refugee hires were starting from too far behind to catch up with the normal rate of productivity” due to lack of English language skills and relevant skills base.

#### Perceived productivity of refugees compared to the local workforce

**Circumstances of being a refugee:** A few employers noted that refugee workers had higher productivity than other groups due to loyalty, fear of losing a job opportunity, over-qualification or desire for inclusion. One interviewee said refugee hires did not take sick leave because of concerns of harming their chances of maintaining employment. Another interviewee said refugee hires were more productive because they were working well below their qualification level. Another interviewee said refugees felt pressured to perform and worked 13-hour days to gain the acceptance of their colleagues.

**Difficult-to-fill, low-skilled roles:** Some interviewees who were hiring for low-skilled positions found the productivity of refugees was better than the local workforce. Higher productivity was attributed to work ethic and the “flexibility and openness to different opportunities.”



**Insight:** The reported higher productivity of refugees compared to other groups can be driven by the circumstances of being a refugee in the Australian workplace, including loyalty, fear of losing a job opportunity, over-qualification or desire for inclusion.

## Perceived cost of hiring and retaining refugees

### Retention cost for refugee employees

Employers who participated in the online survey and the in-depth interviews were asked if it costed more to employ and retain refugees compared to other employees.

#### Factors contributing to additional costs

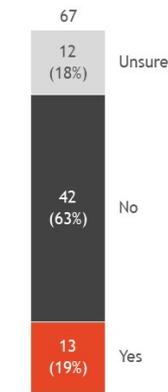
**The cost of hiring refugees:** Sixty three percent (63%) of survey respondents who employed refugees over the past five years said that it did not cost more to hire refugees than it cost to hire other employees.

According to interviewees, the following factors contributed to hiring and retention costs:

- Placement fees to hire refugees through service providers' refugee employment programs;
- Training for refugees (e.g. English, technical training);
- Additional staff to create and manage refugee hiring initiatives;
- Training for staff in charge of recruiting and integrating refugees in the workplace; and
- Mentoring and coaching refugees.

Figure 9

Does it cost more to employ and retain refugees than other employees?<sup>1</sup>



What does the additional cost relate to, and what is the approx % increase in cost?

- English communication training (approx \$2K per person); specialised staff approx half a day a week to manage our program (\$10K per annum); \$5K per person placement fee (Settlement Services International)
- Placement/intern fees and the provision of additional support services
- training of refugees and asylum seekers, specifically trained recruiters, promotion of policy,
- We assist with relocation costs of up to \$1000 however this is recouped via a weekly payroll deduction
- Admin and placement fee
- Fee for CareerSeekers's support
- placement fee from CareerSeekers
- We have employed off the back of the intern program. The increased cost is associated with the intern program, not the hiring at the end of the program.
- We use the Given the Chance program, so participants are additional to our current roster. It's a significant social dividend investment for us. We may well take former refugees through direct recruitment who have got the appropriate rights to work.
- More intense training, and extra explaining of tasks - 15%
- 10%
- Language skills enhancement, training, mentoring and coaching.
- 80%

1. Question only asked if company had hired refugees over past 5 years



**Insight:** Onboarding refugees takes time and effort. Employers may not always be aware of the time and effort for their staff who may put in unnoticed additional hours to make up for lost time on the job or to support refugee hires in their daily lives.

### Hidden expenses linked to hiring and retention

Most survey respondents found that it did not cost more to hire refugees, although responses from interviewees showed that numerous additional resources might be required (with related, but hidden 'costs' to employers).

**Extended time for onboarding:** Numerous interviewees discussed additional time required for onboarding and getting refugees up to speed with technical knowledge and workplace adjustment.

**Work of staff who integrates refugee hires:** A few interviewees spoke about the impact on the productivity of the staff who were tasked with integrating refugees into their roles. The impacts were often due to communication issues and/or skill gaps.

**Ongoing support:** Interviewees shared the efforts they made to provide general support to refugees. One interviewee invested time in unaccredited training to support refugee hires in financial management and stress management. Another interviewee spent personal time outside working hours to support refugees in their personal lives.

**Hiring skilled refugees through placement programs could be seen as a cost or a saving:** Several service providers charge placement fees for their services. One interviewee saved on labour hire fees by using a refugee placement program through which the employer "...hires high-quality candidates at a lot cheaper price" than those of labour hire agencies.

# Insights from employers not seeking to hire refugees

## Summary

Employers who did not seek to hire refugees rated all perceived challenges as more difficult than those who had sought to hire refugees.

Support to overcome barriers to employ and onboard refugees also appeared to be crucial to sustain refugee-hiring initiatives over time. In fact, lack of refugee job-readiness reportedly resulted in integration challenges that prompted some employers to discontinue hiring refugees.

Due to unfamiliarity with the refugee cohort and the visibility of 'refugees' as a social category of employees, employer feedback suggested that the level of success of the 'first contact' could be decisive in determining whether an employer would or would not continue hiring refugees.

The online survey separated employers who were not seeking to hire refugees into two groups:

- Have not hired refugees; and
- Have hired refugees, but no longer sought to hire refugees.

The in-depth interviews focused on employers that had hired refugees; two of those interviewees had stopped hiring refugees.

With this in mind, this chapter explores the perspectives of survey respondents who were not seeking to hire refugees and interviewees who had stopped hiring refugees.

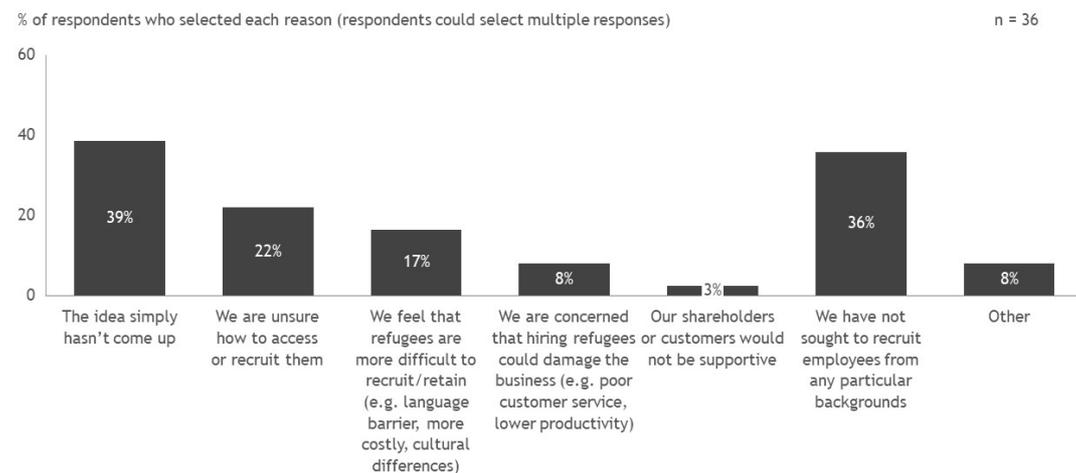
## Reasons for not hiring refugees

Fifty-two percent (52%) of employers surveyed did not actively seek to hire refugees. Common reasons included:

1. The idea not coming up;
2. Not seeking to hire employees from any particular background; and
3. Not knowing how to access or recruit refugees.

Figure 10

### Why has your company not sought to recruit refugees?



Survey questions only asked of companies that have not sought to hire refugees

## Perceived challenges

Employers who were surveyed were asked to identify the challenges they expected to encounter when hiring refugees.

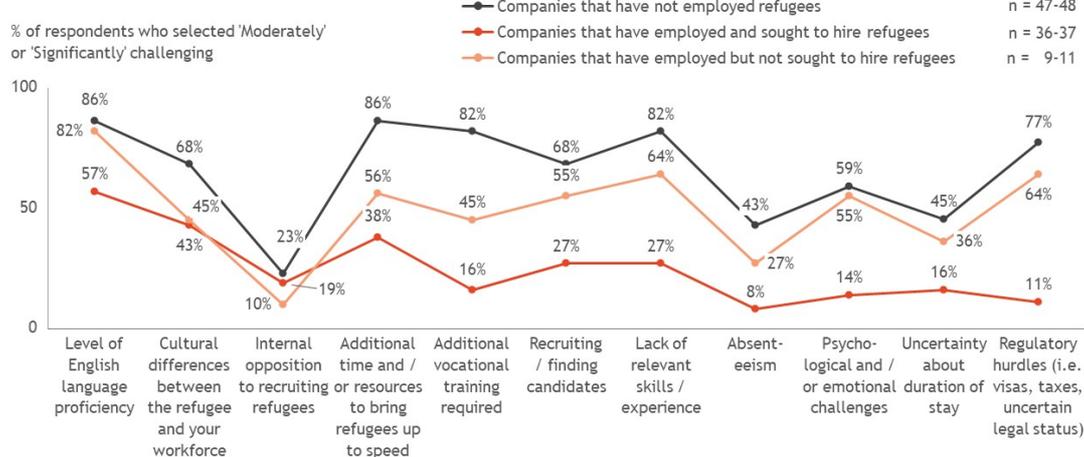
**All challenges perceived as more difficult by employers not seeking to hire:** The employers that have not hired refugees, and the ones that had hired refugees but no longer sought to hire refugees, rated almost all challenges as significantly more difficult than companies that sought to hire refugees.

**Employers that have not hired refugees saw some challenges as more significant:** Compared to employers that had hired refugees, employers that had not hired refugees said that the most challenging factors were the additional time/resources and extra vocational training required.

**Employers that have hired but not actively sought to hire refugees placed the least significance on internal opposition:** Employers that have hired refugees, but no longer sought to hire refugees, placed greater emphasis on all challenges except internal opposition.

Figure 11

How challenging have these factors been in employing refugees / would you expect to be (if company has not hired refugees)?



Survey questions asked of all companies.

## Employer views on recognition, support and incentives

Employers who were surveyed, and who were not seeking to hire refugees, were also asked to identify the support and incentives that were likely to motivate them to hire refugees.

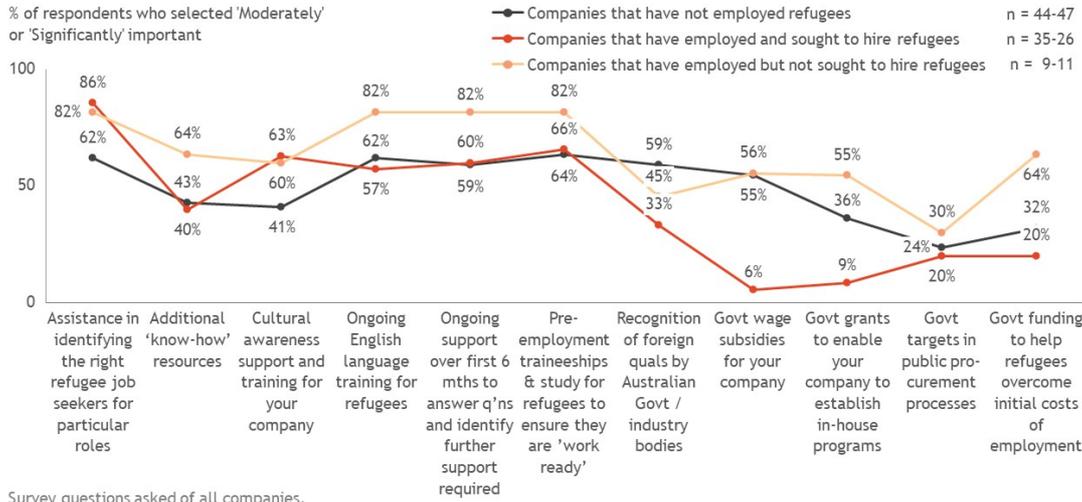


**Insight:** Most employers were not aware of government incentives to hire refugees. Employers who did not seek to hire refugees said that the availability of incentives may have motivated them to hire refugees if they had known about them.

**Recognition of foreign qualifications and government funding for companies not seeking to hire refugees:** Employers that had not hired refugees, and employers that had hired refugees but no longer sought to hire refugees, placed greater importance on the recognition of foreign qualifications, government wage subsidies, and government grants to establish in-house programs, than employers that sought to hire refugees.

Figure 12

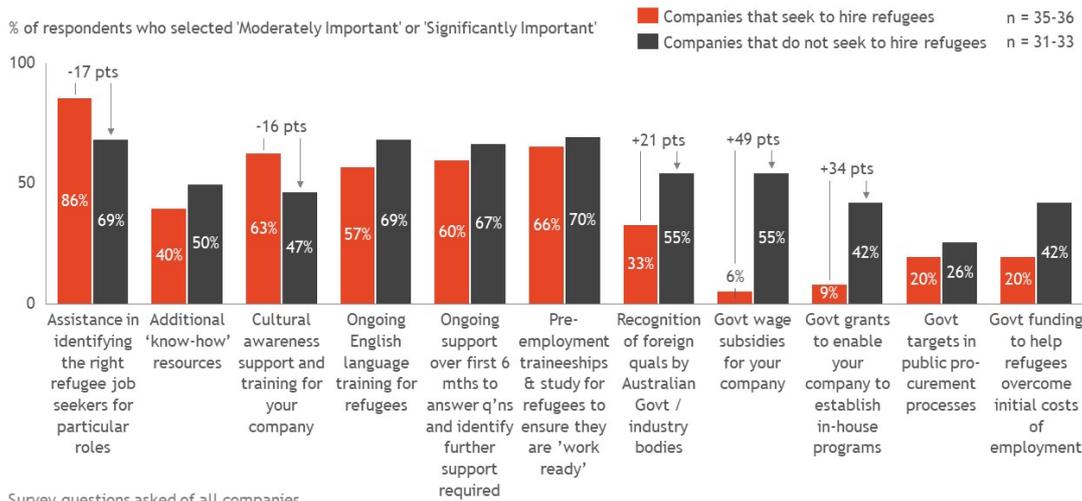
How likely do you think the following types of support and incentives are to motivate your company to employ refugees / How important have the following types of support and incentives been in facilitating refugee employment in your company?



**Recognition of foreign qualifications and government funding for employers that have not employed refugees:** Employers that had not hired refugees placed greater importance on recognition of foreign qualifications and government funding compared to employers that had hired refugees.

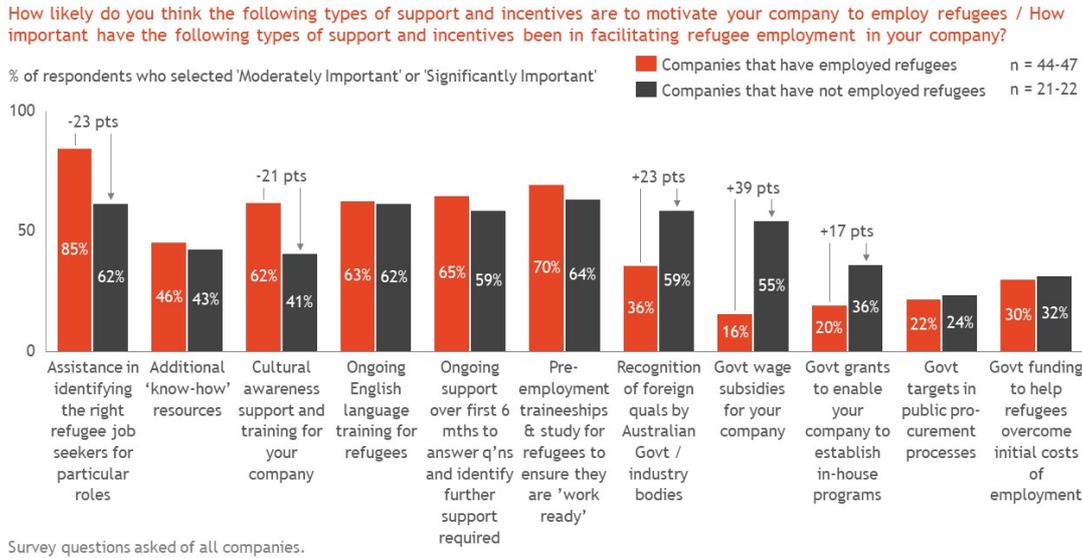
Figure 13

How likely do you think the following types of support and incentives are to motivate your company to employ refugees / How important have the following types of support and incentives been in facilitating refugee employment in your company?



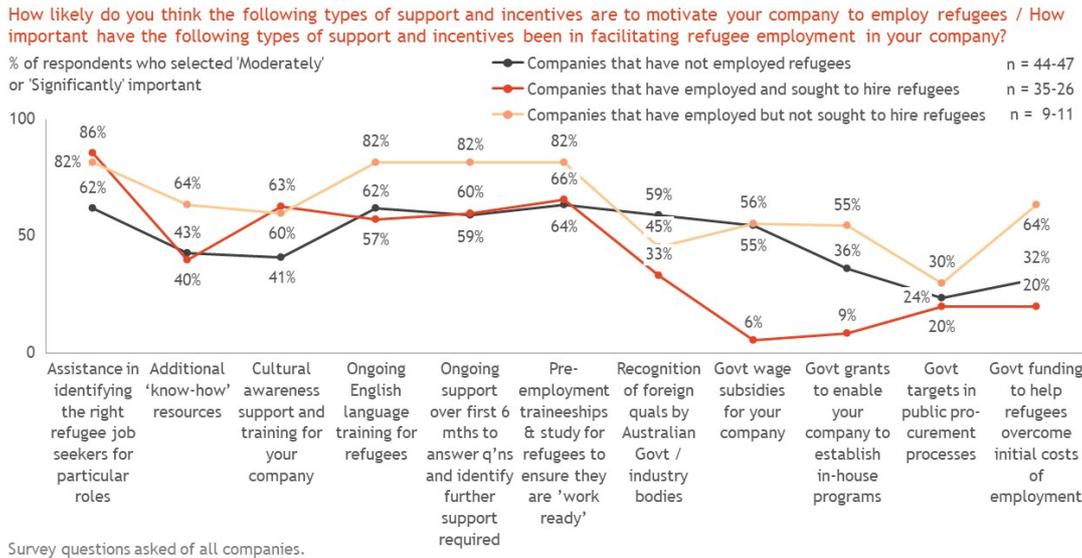
**Incentives perceived as more important for those that do not seek to hire refugees:** Employers that did not seek to hire refugees showed a greater likelihood of being motivated by most factors in comparison to employers that sought to hire refugees.

Figure 14



**Preferences of employers that had employed but not actively sought to hire refugees:** This group of employers were most likely motivated by ongoing English language training, support for the first months of employment, and pre-employment traineeships.

Figure 15



### Perspectives of employers who stopped hiring refugees

Two of the interviewees no longer hired refugees. These employers did not work with support organizations. The following segment of the report identifies what prompted these employers to stop hire refugees.

**Time and effort required to train and onboard:** One interviewee who was hiring for low-skilled positions found the education and vocational level of the refugees started at a lower base than the local workforce. This made the effort to train refugee hires and get them up-to-speed an additional task.

**Impact on staff:** One interviewee spoke of the need to view workplace integration of refugees as an opportunity for “self-learning and development.” The interviewee found it challenging to muster the necessary commitment and patience among both refugees and local staff to persevere with the integration project.

**Support for integration and retention challenges:** One interviewee was unaware of the support available from service providers, and said that the challenges around language proficiency, technical training and workplace readiness were unmanageable for the business to take on without support.

**Lack of focus from government-funded agencies:** One interviewee found that the social welfare agencies lacked focus on refugee employment and resettlement. Outreach efforts seemed to be directed towards employment programs that addressed other groups of vulnerable job seekers.

**Loss of productivity and hiring cost:** One interviewee discussed the longer onboarding time needed for refugees to reach the level of productivity required, which he estimated at 25% more to hire and onboard a refugee than someone from the local workforce. The employee noted that managing labour costs was one of the main business challenges: "...as a small business, we would need an employee to be productive for the amount we're paying."

**Lack of English language proficiency:** One interviewee whose business was unable to provide language training spoke about the challenges and concerns around the lack of English proficiency.



**Insight:** Organisational commitment and additional support is crucial to sustaining refugee hiring initiatives over time. The desire to do something positive for someone is a valuable proposition to encourage employers to hire refugees. However, along with the desire to help, support to overcome barriers to employ and onboard refugees appear to be crucial.

# Role of service providers in facilitating refugee workforce participation

## Summary

Lauded service providers dedicated time and effort to understanding business needs and proposing candidates that are a good fit.

Employers seeking to hire refugees relied on the expertise and support of third-party organisations, such as service providers, to help them mitigate many of the challenges of hiring and integrating refugees in the workplace.

Many employers used the full suite of a service provider's offerings (e.g. search, culture training, resume and interview preparation). Poor referrals were seen as the main reason to discontinue collaborations with service providers.

Employers' feelings towards service providers were influenced by whether a service provider's support was aimed at successful placement and understanding their specific needs.

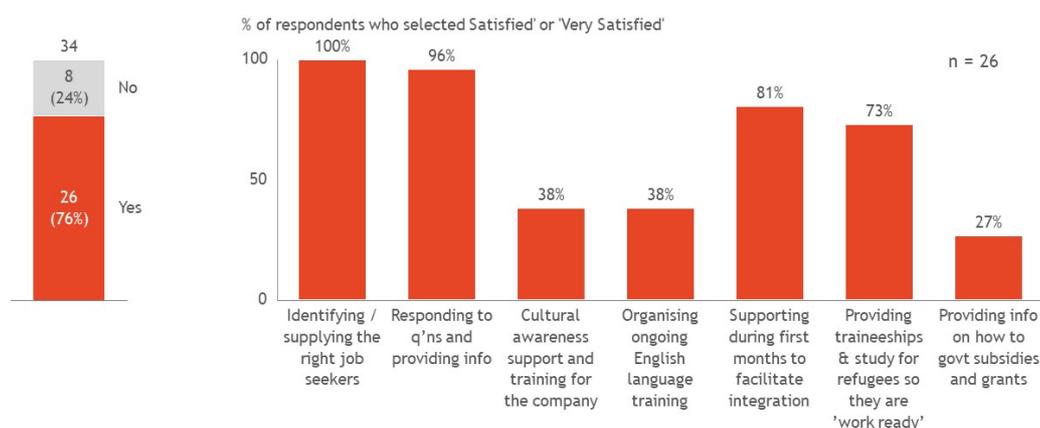
## Expectations of the role of service providers

The online survey and in-depth interviews showed that employers seeking to hire refugees, relied on the expertise and support of third-party organisations to help them mitigate many of the challenges of hiring and integrating refugees in the workplace.

Figure 14

Has your company used service providers?

How satisfied were you with the assistance they provided your company across the following areas?



Survey questions only asked of companies that have actively sought to hire refugees

Appendix 3 lists service providers mentioned by surveyed and interviewed employers.

## Crucial service provider activities identified by employers

Feedback from the online survey and in-depth interviews showed that employer satisfaction with service providers depended on the service provider's ability to successfully carry out the following crucial activities:

- Finding refugees and identifying the right candidate through pre-screening and skill - matching;
- Offering pre-employment training for job and workplace readiness.
- Providing ongoing support for refugees and employers throughout a job placement or/and the first several months of employment.

## Best practices for successful collaboration with service providers

**Focusing on long-term relationships with a limited number of service providers:** Multiple interviewees preferred to work with fewer service providers and invest their time into building an ongoing relationship to most effectively convey information about their business needs.

**Structured refugee placement programs and placement success:** Several employers spoke positively of experienced service providers that had established placement programs that mitigated the challenges of hiring refugees: “They've got a very structured program where they give them the training of the Australian landscape and everything and that support structure is there [...] I think their service is very comprehensive. And we've had really good success.”

**Ongoing support to resolve placement issues:** Multiple interviewees relied on the involvement of service providers to help resolve workplace issues. One interviewee mentioned relying on a service provider on a number of occasions to manage the “escalation of stress related-behaviours” caused by refugee hires’ uncertainty around being able to secure a permanent position.

**Periodic touchpoints between employers and service providers and alternative solutions:** A few interviewees spoke of how collaboration with service providers had helped to secure alternative employment for a refugee when the initial role did not work out.

**Service providers play different roles for employers:** In some cases, service providers played different roles for large and small businesses. Some large companies primarily used the search capability of service providers (e.g. to find the right candidate for the job) and supported onboarding with their existing integration and training processes and resources. Small businesses often needed the full suite of service provider offerings, from search to onboarding (e.g. search, culture training, resume and interview preparation).

## Factors that led to failed collaboration efforts with service providers

**Poor referrals due to failure to understand and communicate expectations of the job:** Numerous interviewees flagged lack of motivation, interest and skills as an issue affecting placement success. This was attributed to service providers’ poor understanding of the business and of the profile of the job candidate.

**Lack of structured, hands-on approach causing delays in the recruitment process:** One employer spoke of unnecessary delays caused by a service provider’s lack of urgency and failure to explain the recruitment process to a refugee applicant. “...They didn’t communicate to her properly...so the process dragged a bit because there was no urgency.”

**Lack of leadership support to collaborate with a service provider:** One interviewee said a collaboration with a service provider broke down because, in part, “the partnership didn’t have the organisation’s backing completely.”

## Jobactive

The federal employment program, jobactive, was mentioned numerous times by interviewees. It was mostly singled out for failing to deliver services that are considered crucial for the successful placement of refugees. Of the five interviewees who mentioned seeking to hire refugees through jobactive, four were from large organisations and one from a small organisation. With one exception, who had mixed experiences, four employers had negative experiences with jobactive services.



**Insight:** Employers’ dissatisfaction with jobactive could be attributed to a mismatch in objectives and priorities. The employers’ objective was to find the right match for the job whereas several employers perceived that jobactive’s priority was to place refugees in any job so that they would no longer be recipients of income support payments from the government.

### Advantages of jobactive according to employers

**Funding to help refugees overcome initial costs of employment:** Several interviewees found that it was helpful for refugees to receive financial support from jobactive to cover the costs of finding employment, such as medical exams, uniforms or transport.

**Placement success with jobactive providers focused on job-matching:** One interviewee commented, "It's a bit difficult at the start ....They don't really understand our industry or the work we actually do.... jobactive providers that put in more time to understand the work do better at referrals."

**Settlement services to help refugees integrate into the community:** One employer who faced the challenge of high employee turnover discussed the impact of settlement services on retention and spoke positively of jobactive providers that also had settlement services. "...They'll actually introduce them to the town and the community kind of events that are around.... We look after them inside of work and them outside of work. Kind of works out well."

### Disadvantages of jobactive according to employers

**Poor referrals of unmotivated candidates:** Multiple employers mentioned the impact of the motivation of refugees to apply for a particular role, and their interest in the role, on the successful outcome of the placement. Several interviewees mentioned jobactive for neglecting to refer candidates that had interest in the job. One interviewee said, "...they [job seekers] are pushed to find any job, and do not get a say in expressing lack of interest."

**Poor referrals due to absence of skill or job matching:** A number of interviewees stopped working with service providers that put little or no effort into understanding their employer's business and the role being advertised. Jobactive was singled out by multiple interviewees for not putting effort into job matching. Some employers noted that having to manage service providers with poor referrals was a burden.

**Focus on volume instead of successful placement:** Several interviewees spoke of their preference for focusing on the right candidates, rather than pursuing quantities of referrals to fill vacancies. One employer explained why they stopped working with jobactive: "...early on in the program, it became a bit of a numbers game for jobactive rather than the right candidate."

**Little or no support throughout the placement:** Feedback from interviews and the online survey show that ongoing assistance from service providers to employers is an integral part of integration. Multiple employers criticised jobactive for lacking support. One interviewee commented, "...we didn't get the support that was promised, or additional training that was promised was never done. So as an employer you have to do it all yourself anyway." Another interviewee said, "...it's quite frustrating when I know that they get funding for placing someone, but then it feels like we're kind of doing all the work and actually making it happen."

# General remarks from employers

## Summary

Employers are looking for the Government to set the tone and take leadership on refugee employment and integration.

Overall, there seemed to be resignation with or acceptance of refugee underemployment.

When sharing their thoughts about employer engagement with refugee workforce integration, interviewees made some general observations on refugee employment and their expectations from the government.

**Resignation around refugee underemployment:** Despite efforts to help refugees access employment, there was an underlying sense of acceptance and resignation around the lack of recognition of foreign qualifications and subsequent underemployment. One interviewee who was passionate about refugee employment said, “I've got engineers, I've got...petroleum engineers, there's industrial engineers, there's teachers...from a lot of different industries, but they're still willing to pack potatoes, and fill apples, and stack shelves, and they do it with a smile.”

Another interviewee shared the success story of an engineer, but the sentiment of underemployment was echoed by settlement agencies and refugees themselves: “...when she first arrived and went through a settlement agency, she was basically told... 'Don't expect to get work as an engineer, it just won't happen'. So, she really had given up on that. So, for her to restart her career here [when] her original career was just astonishing. It went against everything she's been told.”

**The need for government leadership on refugee integration:** A few interviewees said it was important for government to take the lead and clearly communicate its values and mission for the integration of refugees, and to “...show society how the government looks after them, and communicate how government supports businesses that look after them.” One interviewee who was hiring for trade positions connected the lack of a shared vision to underemployment: “The sad thing about that is the people we're getting are probably more qualified and intelligent.... We've got two structural engineers, we've got an electrical engineer, a math teacher, two business owners...”.

**Businesses looked to government to share responsibilities for refugee employment:** Some interviewees expected the government to take a more active role. One interviewee noted, “The government isn't coming forward and taking the lead; rather they are passing the buck, passing the problems to someone else to handle.”

**Mixed messages around refugee integration:** Some interviewees were concerned that the government's welcoming messages towards refugees were for publicity reasons and deflected from the actual position. One interviewee said that the government needed to send a consistent message to combat the stigmas that kept business from hiring refugees: “On one hand, the government says, ‘We like refugees. We like migrants who come to us’, ...while on the other hand, they put [refugees] in a detention centre for a couple of years.”

# In-depth case studies

## Summary

There seems to be a lack of shared understanding among staff about the complexities of hiring refugees.

The perceptions of refugee workforce integration were different across organisations. Even in the case of small employers, HR and senior management tended to be disconnected from the reality of daily interactions and challenges faced by refugees.

To gain insight into different perspectives within the workplace, five in-depth cases were conducted in which three to five people per company were interviewed. The aim of these in-depth cases was to provide a deeper understanding of how perceptions on refugee workforce integration could differ based on roles within an organisation.

## Case 1 – Employer hiring for trade positions

Number of interviewees: 3

Interviewees' roles:

- Leadership (1)
- Training Support (1)
- Supervisory (1)

**Recruitment and integration:** All interviewees found English language proficiency was a challenge in the recruitment and integration of refugees. Additionally, interviewees in training support and supervisory roles found that job and workplace readiness required additional attention.

**Productivity:** The interviewees in the supervisory and training support roles both expected refugees to be less productive during their training phase. These expectations facilitated onboarding.

**Cost:** The interviewee in a training support role viewed the cost of hiring refugees as lower because of wage subsidies received, while the interviewee in a supervisory role pointed out that the cost could be perceived as higher due to some initial reduced productivity. The interviewee in a leadership role referred to the wider impact of refugees obtaining financial security through sustainable employment and eliminating their dependency on financial assistance from the government, rather than looking at the cost of refugee employment. In this regard, the direct supervisor interacting with refugees on a daily basis was more likely to identify the possible additional costs of refugee workplace integration and ways to ameliorate them.

## Case 2 – Employer hiring for skilled positions

Number of interviewees: 4

Interviewees' roles:

- HR/Diversity & Inclusion (2)
- Supervisory (2)

**Integration and retention:** Interviewees in HR/Diversity & Inclusion roles mainly identified mentorship and buddy systems as methods for facilitating refugee integration and retention. Their focus was on social and cultural integration and workplace inclusion. On the other hand, interviewees in supervisory roles, who worked directly with the refugees, saw technical and communications skills to function in the job as the key to integration and retention, and paid more attention to on-the-job performance.

**Productivity:** Interviewees in HR/Diversity & Inclusion roles expected refugee hires to be as productive as other groups and attributed productivity issues to inadequate skill matching and lack of job readiness. Interviewees in supervisory roles had lower expectations around refugee productivity. As in case 1, supervisors were more likely to directly face and manage on-the-job challenges of refugee workplace integration.

**Cost:** Interviewees in HR/Diversity & Inclusion roles considered that the additional cost of hiring refugees was minimal. At the same time, they anticipated the cost was likely to be more if the employer dedicated more efforts into ongoing training to improve refugee retention. The interviewee in the senior supervisory role did not consider the cost of hiring refugees to be higher, while the interviewee in a supervisory role perceived a higher cost and linked it to initial challenges in achieving optimal performance.

### Case 3 – Employer hiring for customer-service positions

Number of interviewees: 3

Interviewees' roles:

- HR /Diversity & Inclusion (1)
- Supervisory (2)

**Integration and retention:** The interviewee in an HR/Diversity & Inclusion role spoke of the importance of cultural training for supervisors and staff to better integrate and retain refugee hires. The interviewees in supervisory roles found that setting realistic expectations about the initial expected levels of productivity was important for integration and retention of refugees.

**Cost:** The interviewee in an HR/Diversity & Inclusion role, identified placement cost through service providers as additional cost. The interviewees in supervisory roles pointed to the additional cost of extending the training period for those refugees that were not initially proficient in their role.

### Case 4 – Employer hiring for various positions in a retail environment

Number of interviewees: 3

Interviewees' roles:

- HR/Diversity & Inclusion (1)
- Supervisory (2)

**Integration:** The interviewee in an HR/Diversity & Inclusion role and the interviewee in a senior supervisory role found that pre-employment training was important for successful integration. Both interviewees with supervisory roles, who worked directly with refugees, spoke of the importance of preparing and training other staff to help make refugee hires feel welcome and included.

**Productivity:** Both interviewees in supervisory roles noted no difference in productivity between refugees and other groups. The interviewee in an HR/Diversity & Inclusion role credited rigorous pre-employment training with helping refugee hires to start employment at the same level as hires from other groups.

### Case 5 – Employer hiring for low-skilled positions

Number of interviewees: 3

Interviewees' roles:

- HR/Diversity & Inclusion (2)
- Supervisory (1)

**Integration and retention:** Interviewees with HR/Diversity & Inclusion roles found integration and retention success was dependent on whether refugees felt included in the workplace and in the community. The interviewee with a supervisory role who worked directly with refugees found that cultural differences could be challenging to integration and retention.

**Productivity:** The interviewees with HR/Diversity & Inclusion roles saw no difference in productivity between refugee hires and other groups, while the interviewee with a supervisory role found refugees were willing to work more hours than other workforce.

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It should be noted that two of the individuals interviewed for the in-depth cases had a refugee background. These individuals had a more intimate understanding of refugee challenges in the Australian workplace, and tended to be more willing to provide extra support to refugee hires.

## 6. Closing Words

Refugee integration in the workplace poses multiple challenges. However, the majority of employers that have hired refugees would recommend that other employers do the same. By following best practices in recruitment, integration and retention, and by leveraging the support of service providers, many employers are successfully integrating refugees into the Australian workforce.

Yet, with consistently high unemployment and underemployment rates among refugees, there is an opportunity for governments to take a leadership role in providing support and incentives to help more employers hire more refugees successfully and sustainably to bolster refugee employment and support their full social and economic inclusion in Australia.

# Author Biography

## **Dr Betina Szkudlarek**

Betina Szkudlarek is Associate Professor in Management at The University of Sydney Business School. Betina's core research interests lie at the intersection of cross-cultural management, international HRM, international business ethics, and management of diversity. Her work has been published in top-tier international journals such as *Organization Studies*, *Human Resource Management* and *Journal of Business Ethics*. Her recent research program focuses on refugee workforce integration.

Betina is a regular contributor to public debate on topical issues linked to management of diversity, global mobility and cross-cultural management. Her opinion pieces have been featured by the *Wall Street Journal*, *Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Australian*, among others.

Betina has extensive experience in training, coaching and mentoring in various areas linked to management of diversity, global leadership development, human resources and intercultural competence. She has worked with numerous corporate and governmental clients, including the Shell, T-Mobile, Westpac and Daimler. Beyond her academic commitments, Betina holds the post of a Strategic, Sustainability, and Growth Consultant with the United National Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC).

# Appendix 1 – Online Survey Questions

## PART 1 of 3

Please answer the following questions to the best of your knowledge.

For the purposes of the following questions, the term 'refugee' refers to any person who, in their dealings with your company, has self-identified as a refugee or whom you believe to have entered Australia on a humanitarian visa or as any asylum seeker within the last 20 years.

**1.1. Based on the definition above, to your knowledge has your company employed one or more refugees in Australia in the last 5 years?**

- Yes
- No

**1.2. Has your company actively sought to employ refugees?**

- Yes
- No

This Question is Conditionally Shown if: (1.1 = Yes)

**1.3. To your knowledge, approximately how many refugees has your company employed (in Australia in the last 5 years)?**

This Question is Conditionally Shown if: (1.1 = Yes)

**1.4. Does it cost your company more to employ and retain refugees than other employees?**

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

This Question is Conditionally Shown if: (1.4 = Yes)

**1.5. What does the additional cost relate to (e.g. training, specialised staff etc.)? If possible, please give an indication of the % increase in cost to employ a refugee compared to other employees.**

This Question is Conditionally Shown if: (1.1 = Yes)

**1.6. Has your company tended to employ refugees of one gender more than the other? If so, are you able to provide an estimate of the ratio split between genders for the refugees your company has employed?**

This Question is Conditionally Shown if: (1.1 = Yes)

**1.7. What is ratio split between genders across all your company's employees?**

This Question is Conditionally Shown if: (1.2 = Yes)

**1.8. Over what period of time has your company specifically sought to employ refugees?**

- Less than 1 year
- 1 - 3 years
- 3 - 5 years
- More than 5 years

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## PART 2 of 3 – Company has not sought to employ refugees

**2a.1. Why has your company not sought to recruit refugees? [select all that apply]**

- The idea simply hasn't come up
- We are unsure how to access or recruit them
- We feel that refugees are more difficult to recruit/retain (e.g. language barrier, more costly, cultural differences)
- We are concerned that hiring refugees could damage the business (e.g. poor customer service, lower productivity)
- Our shareholders or customers would not be supportive
- We have not sought to recruit employees from any particular backgrounds
- Other

**2a.2. Can you provide further details on your answer above?**

**2a.3. How likely do you think the following types of support and incentives are to motivate your company to employ refugees?**

	Unlikely	Slightly likely	Moderately likely	Significantly likely
Assistance in identifying the right refugee job seekers for particular roles (e.g. skill matching)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Additional 'know-how' resources (e.g. refugee employment guide)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cultural awareness support and training for your company	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ongoing English language training for refugees	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ongoing support over the first 6 months of employment to answer questions and identify where further support is required	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Pre-employment traineeships & study for refugees to ensure they are 'work ready'	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Recognition of foreign qualifications by Australian government/industry bodies	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Government wage subsidies for your company	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Government grants to enable your company to establish in-house programs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Government targets in public procurement	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

processes with respect to refugees

Government funding to help refugees overcome initial costs of employment (e.g. transport, clothing / footwear)                                                                       

**2a.4. Are there any types of support or incentives not listed above that would motivate your company to seek to employ refugees?**

**2a.5. What challenges would you expect to encounter should your company seek to recruit/employ refugees?**

	Not challenging	Slightly challenging	Moderately challenge	Significantly challenging
Level of English language proficiency	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cultural differences between the refugee and your workforce	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Internal opposition to recruiting refugees	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Additional time and/or resources required to bring refugees up to speed with workplace demands	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Additional vocational training required	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Recruiting/ finding candidates	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lack of relevant skills/experience	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Absenteeism	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Psychological and/or emotional challenges	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Uncertainty about duration of stay in Australia	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Regulatory hurdles (i.e. visas, taxes, uncertain legal status)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**2a.6. What other difficulties or challenges might you expect to encounter should your company seek to recruit/employ refugees?**

**2a.7. Do you have any additional comments?**

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**PART 2 of 3 – Company has sought to employ refugees**

**2b.1. To what extent have the following motivated your company to seek to employ refugees?**

	Not a motivator	Slight motivator	Moderate motivator	Significant motivator
Business case/commercial needs (excluding government incentives)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Corporate social responsibility	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Customer demand	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The views of an influential staff member or director	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Government incentives (e.g. social procurement targets, wage subsidies)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**2b.2. Are there any other reasons why your company has sought to employ refugees?**

**2b.3. How important have the following types of support and incentives been in facilitating refugee employment in your company?**

	Not important	Slightly important	Moderately important	Significantly important
Assistance in identifying the right refugee job seekers for particular roles (e.g. skill matching)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Additional 'know-how' resources (e.g. refugee employment guide)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cultural awareness support and training for your company	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ongoing English language training for refugees	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ongoing support over the first 6 months of	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

employment to answer questions and identify where further support is required

Pre-employment traineeships & study for refugees to ensure they are 'work ready'	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Recognition of foreign qualifications by Australian government/industry bodies	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Government wage subsidies for your company	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Government grants to enable your company to establish in-house programs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Government targets in public procurement processes with respect to refugees	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Government funding to help refugees overcome initial costs of employment (e.g. transport, clothing/footwear)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**2b.4. Are there any types of support or incentives not listed above that would motivate your company to seek to employ refugees?**

**2b.5. Please specify any state, federal or local government incentives that are available to your company to employ refugees**

**2b.6. Has your company used service providers in the process of employing refugees? (e.g. Refugee Talent, Settlement Services International, Brotherhood of St. Laurence, AMES Australia)**

- Yes
- No

This Question is Conditionally Shown if: (2b.6 = Yes)

**2b.7. Please name a service provider your company has used. (If you have used several, please name the most frequently engaged or the provider whose services you would most like to give feedback on in the following two questions.)**

This Question is Conditionally Shown if: (2b.6 = Yes)

**2b.8. For the above service provider, how satisfied were you with the assistance they provided your company across the following areas (where applicable)?**

Very dissatisfied    
  Dissatisfied    
  Neutral    
  Satisfied    
  Very satisfied

Identifying or supplying the right refugee job seekers for particular roles (e.g. skill matching)	<input type="radio"/>				
Responding to questions and providing adequate information	<input type="radio"/>				
Providing cultural awareness support and training for your company	<input type="radio"/>				
Organising ongoing English language training for refugees	<input type="radio"/>				
Providing ongoing support during the first months of employment to facilitate the integration	<input type="radio"/>				
Providing pre-employment traineeships & study for refugees to ensure they are 'work ready'	<input type="radio"/>				
Providing information on how your company can access government subsidies and grants	<input type="radio"/>				

This Question is Conditionally Shown if: (2b.6 = Yes)

**2b.9. Do you have any additional comments on this service provider?**

This Question is Conditionally Shown if: (2b.6 = Yes)

**2b.10. Have you used any other service providers and how satisfied were you with assistance they provided?**

**2b.11. To what extent has your company found the following to be benefits of employing refugees?**

	Not a benefit	Slight benefit	Moderate benefit	Significant benefit
Addresses consumer/shareholder demand for diversity in employment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Makes our business reflect the diversity of the community	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Provides financial benefit through government incentives (e.g. social procurement targets, wage subsidies)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Enhances organisational 'purpose' and/or staff morale	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
They tend to be loyal and/or well performing employees	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Provides access to a new pool of recruits	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**2b.12. Please tell us about any other ways that employing refugees benefit your company.**

**2b.13. How challenging have the following been for your company when recruiting/employing refugees?**

	Not challenging	Slightly challenging	Moderately challenge	Significantly challenging
Level of English language proficiency	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cultural differences between the refugee and your workforce	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Internal opposition to recruiting refugees	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Additional time and/or resources required to bring refugees up to speed with workplace demands	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Additional vocational training required	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Recruiting/ finding candidates	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lack of relevant skills/experience	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Absenteeism	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Psychological and/or emotional challenges	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

- Uncertainty about duration of stay
- Regulatory hurdles (i.e. visas, taxes, uncertain legal status)

**2b.14. What other difficulties or challenges has your company encountered when recruiting/employing refugees?**

**2b.15. What types of jobs have refugees been recruited into your company for? [select all that apply]**

- Entry level - unskilled
- Entry level - skilled or professional
- Mid or senior level positions
- Other

This Question is Conditionally Shown if: (2b.15 (Other) = Selected)

**2b.16. Please elaborate on 'Other':**

**2b.17. Does your company still seek to recruit refugees?**

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

This Question is Conditionally Shown if: (2b.17 = No)

**2b.18. Why does your company no longer seek to recruit refugees?**

**2b.19. Does your company offer any programs that are pathways to employment for refugees?**

- Paid internship / work experience
- Unpaid internship / volunteering opportunity
- Traineeship / apprenticeship
- Other

This Question is Conditionally Shown if: (2b.19 (Other) = Selected)

**2b.20. Please elaborate on 'Other':**

**2b.21. Does your company specifically seek to recruit refugees based on any of the following characteristics? [select all that apply]**

- Gender
- Age
- Language spoken or country of origin
- Other
- No preference

This Question is Conditionally Shown if: (2b.21 (Gender) = Not Selected)

**2b.22. Please specify the refugee group(s) you preference and your reason(s) for preferencing them:**

**2b.23. Does your company specifically seek to recruit jobseekers from other groups in society (e.g. youth, indigenous Australians etc.)?**

- Yes
- No

This Question is Conditionally Shown if: (2b.23 = Yes)

**2b.24. Please specify which other group(s) you preference and your reason(s) for preferring them:**

**2b.25. How productive do you believe the refugees your company employed have been overall compared to:**

	Less	About the same	More	Large variation	Unknown
a) your expectations	<input type="radio"/>				
b) your broader workforce	<input type="radio"/>				

**2b.26. How likely are you, based on your experience, to recommend employing refugees to others?**

- | Very unlikely         | Unlikely              | Neutral               | Likely                | Very likely           |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> |

**2b.27. Based on your experience, what types of support do employers need in order to accommodate and support refugees in employment?**

**2b.28. Do you have any additional comments?**

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### **PART 3 of 3**

This survey will be used to better understand employers' views on and experiences in engaging refugees in their workplace.

In order to do so we would like to know more about the company and industry you work in. Your responses will remain anonymous. Publications resulting from this survey will not refer to specific employers or individuals.

**3.1. Please tell us a bit about yourself and the company you represent**

- What is your name?
- What is your role within your company?
- What company do you work for?
- Approximately how many people does your company employ?

**3.2. Is there someone else in your organisation who you feel should also complete this survey? If so, please provide their details below:**

- Name:
- Phone number:
- Email address:

**3.3. What industry does your company operate in?\***

- Accommodation & Food Services
- Administrative & Support Services
- Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing
- Arts & Recreation Services
- Construction
- Education & Training
- Electricity, Gas, Water & Waste Services
- Financial & Insurance Services
- Health Care & Social Assistance
- Information Media & Telecommunications
- Manufacturing
- Mining
- Professional, Scientific & Technical Services
- Public Administration & Safety
- Rental, Hiring & Real Estate Services
- Retail Trade
- Transport, Postal & Warehousing
- Wholesale Trade
- Other

This Question is Conditionally Shown if: (3.3 = Other)

**3.4. Please specify the industry:**

**3.5. What part(s) of Australia does your company operate in? Please stipulate state(s) and/or region(s) and/or postcode(s)**

**3.6. Are you open to participating in a more in-depth interview with the University of Sydney in relation to your experience in this area?**

- Yes (please provide your contact details below)
- No

**3.7. Organisations exist in Australia which provide employment brokerage services by matching refugee job seekers with employers. These organisations focus on the employer and on providing the employer with the support they need to successfully employ refugees. Would you be interested in learning more about these refugee employment brokerage services?**

- Yes (please provide your contact details below)
- No

**3.8. Please enter your contact details below.**

- Phone number:
- Email address:

# Appendix 2 – In-depth Interview Questions

## PART 1

### Individual background

- 1) Please tell us about your role in the business.
  - a. Position in the business.
  - b. In what ways do you engage with refugees in your line of work?

### Diversity

- 2) How diverse is your workforce? How many refugees? How many migrants?
  - a. What are the positions held by your refugee employees?
  - b. What are the positions held by your migrant employees?
  - c. Do you see differences between your migrant and refugee employees? What are they?

### Motivation

- 3) Why do you recruit refugees? When did this approach emerge and why? Did this motivation change over time?
- 4) Do you think this motivation is shared by other members of the organisation? Why (not)?
- 5) How do you engage various people within the organisation to support refugee employment? What works and what doesn't work?

### Recruitment

- 6) Please tell us about the recruitment and selection process of refugees.
  - a. What positions do you offer refugees?
  - b. How do you seek refugee candidates?
  - c. If any, what were the difficulties in recruiting refugees (Should cover recognition of qualifications and experiences, language skills, checking references, etc)?
    - i. How was the recruitment process for refugee applicants, compared with recruiting local employees? Or other migrant applicants?
    - ii. How did you overcome difficulties/challenges (Should cover recognition of qualifications and experiences, language skills, and checking references, etc)?
    - iii. If applicable: Why did you recruit refugees, despite such difficulties?
  - d. What was easy about recruiting refugees?
  - e. If applicable, did support organisations partake in the recruitment and selection process at any stage?
    - i. Which organisations do/did you work with?
    - ii. How did you find their support? Why?
    - iii. Did you use the jobactive? What was your experience with the jobactive?

### Integration

- 7) Please tell us about general integration of refugee employees in your workplace. What initiatives do you undertake to facilitate the integration? (Should cover social, cultural and technical aspects of the integration).
  - a. What are your best practices in regards to integration of refugee workforce?
  - b. What do you believe is the most important factor in helping new refugee recruits settle in their new role?
  - c. To what extent individual attitudes/characteristics/background matter?
  - d. Based on your experience, can you share an example of a successful case

- regarding a newly recruited refugee in your business? And an unsuccessful case?
- e. If applicable, did support organisations partake in the integration process at any stage? In what way?
- f. Why does your organisation put so much effort in the process of preparing the refugee and/or the work unit to integrate? (if applicable)
- g. What do you think would happen if this support was not available?

### **Retention**

- 8) Please tell us about your experiences retaining refugees? Are their retention rates different from other groups of employees? If yes, why?
  - a. What are your best practices in regards to retention of refugee workforce?

### **General**

- 9) Based on your experience, why do you think refugees face challenges in finding and sustaining employment?
- 10) In your experience, what is the greatest obstacle for hiring and working with refugee employees?
  - a. Can you share an example of challenges faced most often by newly recruited refugees?
  - b. How do you support them to overcome those challenges?
- 11) What are the common (mis)understandings about hiring/working with refugees?
- 12) If you could share a message to the broader community about hiring refugees, what would it be?
- 13) What do you think would engage other employers in your industry to hire more refugees?
- 14) What do you think your company does really well when it comes to supporting refugee employees, either in the short-term or long-term?
- 15) What do you think your company could do to improve the experience of refugee employees, either in the short-term or long-term?

### **Companies who do NOT hire refugees**

- 16) Why haven't you hired refugees so far?
- 17) What would need to change for you to hire refugees?
- 18) Which incentives and why would encourage you to hire refugees and which incentives are of least relevance? Why?

## **PART 2.**

### **Questions directly linked to the survey**

- 1. Does it cost your company more to employ and retain refugees than other employees?
- 2. What is the approximate additional cost to hiring refugees and what are these costs related to? (e.g. training, specialised staff etc.)
  - How and why do you allocate resources?
- 3. Has your company specifically sought to employ refugees?
  - Why/ why not?
- 4. How likely do you think the following types of support and incentives are to motive your company to employ refugees?

- Assistance in identifying the right refugee job seekers for particular roles (e.g. skill matching)
- Additional 'know-how' resources (e.g. refugee employment guide)
- Cultural awareness support and training for your company
- Ongoing English language training for refugees
- Pre-employment traineeships & study for refugees to ensure they are 'work ready'
- Recognition of foreign qualifications by Australian government/industry bodies
- Government wage subsidies for your company
- Government grants to enable your company to establish in-house programs
- Government targets in public procurement processes with respect to refugees
- Government funding to help refugees overcome initial costs of employment (e.g. transport, clothing/footwear)

*Explore those of relevance*

5. How important have the following types of support and incentives been in facilitating refugee employment in your company?

- Assistance in identifying the right refugee job seekers for particular roles (e.g. skill matching)
- Additional 'know-how' resources (e.g. refugee employment guide)
- Cultural awareness support and training for your company
- Ongoing English language training for refugees
- Pre-employment traineeships & study for refugees to ensure they are 'work ready'
- Recognition of foreign qualifications by Australian government/industry bodies
- Government wage subsidies for your company
- Government grants to enable your company to establish in-house programs
- Government targets in public procurement processes with respect to refugees
- Government funding to help refugees overcome initial costs of employment (e.g. transport, clothing/footwear)

*Explore those of relevance*

6. Please specify any state, federal or local government incentives that are available to your company to employ refugees

- What are the advantages and disadvantages of these incentive schemes?

7. What would you identify as the greatest advantages of hiring refugees?

8. What were the greatest challenges hiring refugees? How did you overcome them?

9. Please specify any regulatory hurdles you have encountered or might expect to encounter when recruiting/employing refugees.

10. Does your company still seek to recruit refugees?\*

- Why/ why not?

11. Does your company specifically seek to recruit refugees who are women, youth or other group?

- Why/ why not?

12. Does your company preference recruiting refugees based on any particular demographics?

- Please elaborate on your reason for preferencing.

13. How productive do you believe the refugees your company employed have been overall compared to

- Your expectations
- Your local workforce

- If different, why?

14. How likely are you, based on your experience, to recommend employing refugees to others?

- Why?

15. Based on your experience, what types of support do employers need in order to accommodate and support refugees in employment?

- Do you have any additional comments or questions?

## Appendix 3 – Service Providers and Other Referral Organisations

Employers mentioned working with the numerous organisations to hire refugees. This list only includes service providers named by employers and does not reflect the diversity of organisations providing support in refugee employment across the country.

<b>Service Providers and other Support Organisations</b>	<b>Mentioned by Survey Respondents</b>	<b>Mentioned by Interviewees</b>
AMES Australia	X	
ASRC (Asylum Seeker Resource Centre)	X	X
atWork Australia	X	
Brotherhood of Saint Laurence	X	X
CareerSeeker	X	X
CMY (Centre for Multicultural Youth)	X	
Community Corporate		X
Jesuit Refugee Service		X
Jobactive		X
Jobs Victoria	X	
Max Employment		X
Melaleuca Refugee Centre	X	
Melbourne Employment Forum		X
Melbourne Polytechnic	X	
MRCs (Migrant Resource Centres)		X
Refugee Talent	X	X
Spectrum	X	
SSI (Settlement Solutions International)	X	X
St. Vincent de Paul Society		X
TAFE (Technical and Further Education)		X
Wyndham Community Centre		X

## Appendix 4 – References

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