Non-metropolitan Settlement and Integration Outcomes of Humanitarian migrants in Australia

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The University of Queensland

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Background

Resettlement in Australia

- Strict onshore asylum-seeking policies, but common destination (Fozdar and Hartley, 2013).

- ~115,000 humanitarian migrants resettled in Australia over the past decade (Australian Red Cross, 2022).

Policy shift (Department of Home Affairs, 2020; Forrest et al., 2012; Hugo, 2011)

- 45% humanitarian migrants settled in non-metro areas in 2019 compared to 10% in the 2000s and early 2010s 50% target

International evidence is mixed

- Poorer employment, education, housing, health outcomes, and higher risk of discrimination in the UK, Sweden and Canada (Boswell, 2003; Aslund, 2005; Phillips, 2006; Stewart and Shaffer, 2015; Rose, 2019).

- Better school enrolment and probability of finding first job in Denmark and Sweden (Damm and Rosholm, 2010; Hernes, Arendt, Joona, and Tronstad, 2019).

Non-Metropolitan settlement outcomes of humanitarian migrants in Australia

Labour market outcomes (Curry et al., 2018; Hugo, 2011; Wilding and Nuun, 2018)

- More low-skilled jobs available; but a mismatch of skills, aspirations and occupational outcomes, and lower income.

Education (Joyce and Liamputtong, 2017)

- There is limited access to higher and quality education and not enough teacher, especially for trained teacher who is familiar humanitarian migrants

Social outcomes (Curry et al., 2018; Major et al., 2013; Wilding and Nuun, 2018)

- The communities were regarded as welcoming and supportive, but there are also reports of discrimination and racism
- Ethnic communities are less established and small in non-metropolitan areas

However, existing research is mainly qualitative.

Conceptualising integration

Resettlement is not the end of the journey for people seeking refuge

- Integration is a complex and gradual process, comprised of legal, economic, social and cultural dimensions (UNHCR, 2021)

  Integration as a **multidimensional**, **longitudinal and spatial process**

- Existing research is mainly cross-sectional and neglected the heterogeneity of the longitudinal nature of integration. (Pritchard et al, 2019)

  Especially for the spatial aspect of integration.

Multidimensionality

Longitudinal

Spatial
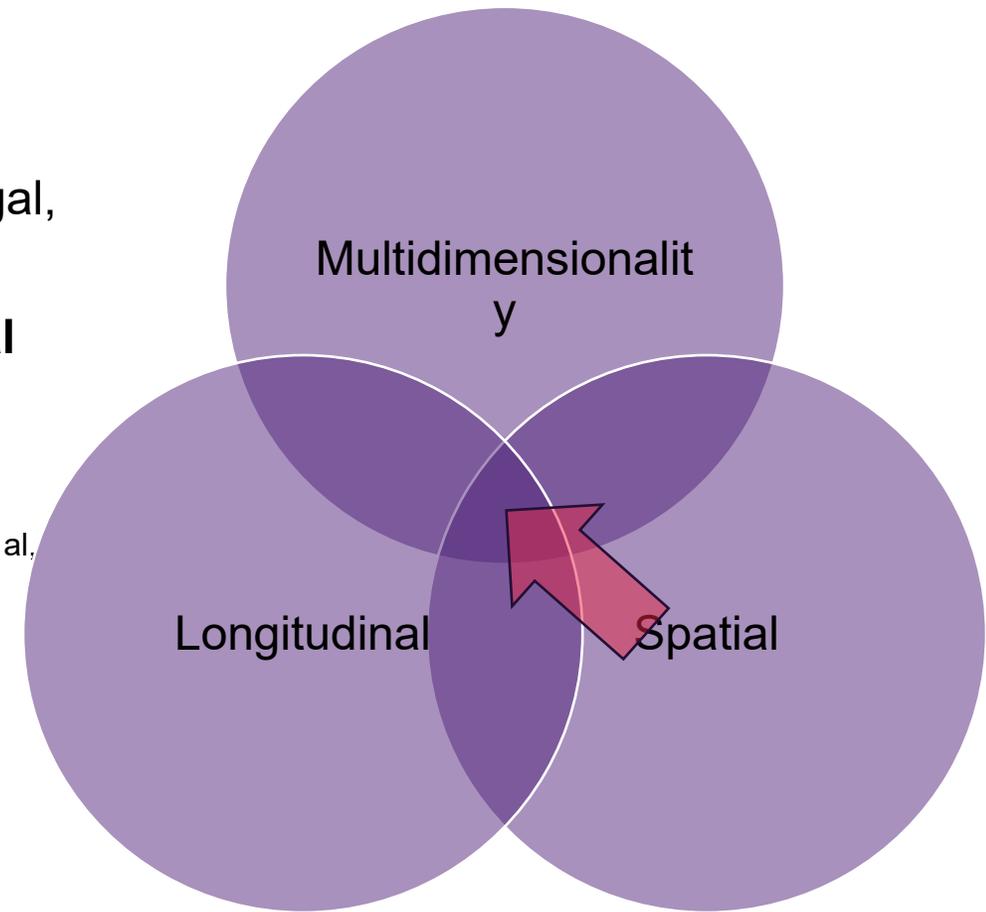
Toward an unified approach to integration

Multinational process (Ager and Strang, 2008)

- Markers and means (Employment; Education; Housing; Health)
- Social connections (Social bridges; Social bonds; Social links)
- Facilitators (Language and cultural knowledges; Safety and stability)
- Foundation (Rights and citizenship)

Non-linear and enduring process (Lichtenstein and Puma, 2019)

- Different domains of integration do not improve in a constant pace and same pace.
- Some of the integration outcomes of humanitarian migrants take years to catch up with other migrants

Location of settlement matters (Hugo, 2008; Joyce and Liamputtong, 2017; Major et al., 2013)

- Access to key services and resources, and social network
- Subsequent migration trajectories, labour market outcomes and ethnic concentration/segregation
- Neighbourhood effects

Research Question

1. Is there any association between settlement location (metro vs non-metro) and integration outcomes of humanitarian migrants?

2. Do the associations shift over time?

Building a New Life in Australia (BNLA)

Building a New Life in Australia (BNLA)

- Longitudinal study HMs who were granted PR in 2013

- 5 waves of annual panel data from 2013 to 2018

- Enables us to study multiple integration over time across metropolitan and non-metropolitan

- Sample (9,401 observations and 2,314 individuals)

    Humanitarian migrants who were 18-65 at the time of interview

Measures

Independent variables

- Metropolitan vs non-metropolitan (based on the ASGS remoteness classification)
- Wave (Duration of stay)

Outcomes of interests

- Objective outcomes
  - In paid work, weekly income, NEET, Having stable housing (long-term contract and house ownership vs other arrangement)
- Subjective
  - Self-reported physical health, probable serious mental health illness (K6 scores), English proficiency, life satisfaction, experience of discrimination, sense of belonging

Analytic Methods

Randoms effects regression models

$$y_{it} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 region_{it} + \beta_2 wave_{it} + a_i + \epsilon_{it} \qquad\qquad (1)$$

$$y_{it} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 region_{it} + \beta_2 wave_{it} + \beta_3\, x_{it} + a_i + \epsilon_{it} \qquad\qquad (2)$$

$$y_{it} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 region_{it} + \beta_2 wave_{it} + \beta_3 (wave * region) + \beta_4\, x_{it} + a_i + \epsilon_{it} \quad (3)$$

$region$: 0=metropolitan,1=non-metropolitan

i: individuals

t: wave

x: control variables (primary/secondary applicants, country of origin, onshore/offshore applicants, sex, age, educational attainment, marital status, number of children, employment before arrival)

Findings (regression results)

$$y_{it} = \beta_0 + \boxed{\beta_1} region_{it} + \beta_2 wave_{it} + \beta_3\, x_{it} + a_i + \epsilon_{it} \qquad\qquad (2)$$

	Employed (OR)	Income (β)	NEET (OR)	Physical health (β)	Serious mental illness (OR)	Experienced discrimination (OR)	English proficiency (β)	Life satisfaction (β)	Sense of belonging (β)	Having stable housing (OR)
Non-metropolitan settlement	3.55***	−58.75	0.35***	−0.02	1.06	2.60***	0.03	0.05	0.01	1.40***
No. of obs	2,313	788	2,309	2,314	2,305	2,312	2,313	2,305	2,305	2,309
No. of individuals	9,345	1,349	8,290	9,401	9,230	9,274	9,360	7,483	9,256	9,273

Note: control variables are not included in this table

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Findings (interaction effects)
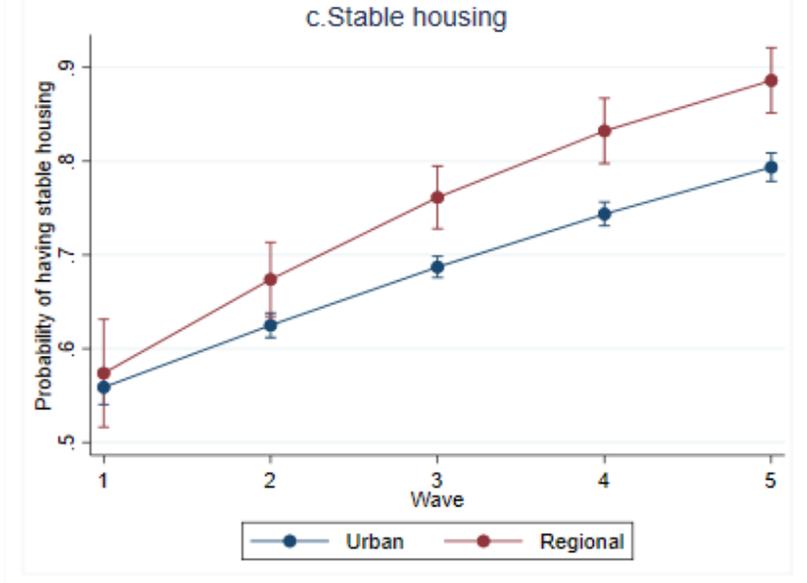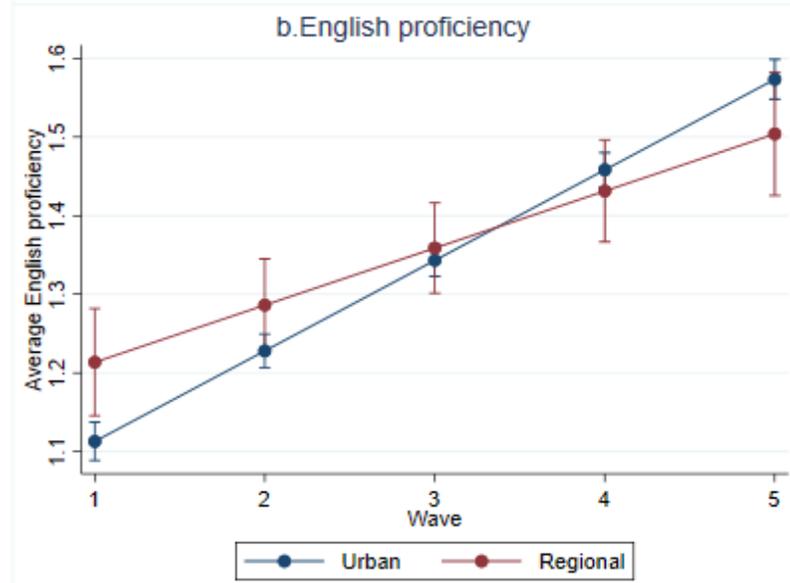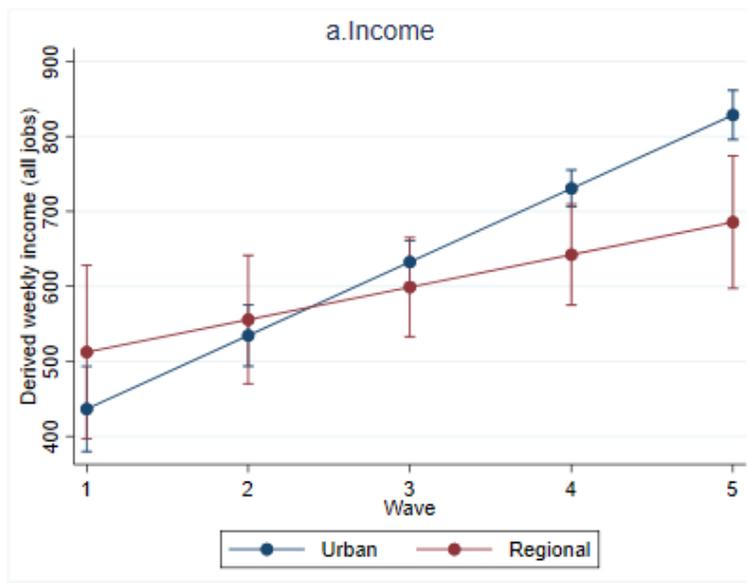
Summary of Findings

- Integration outcomes are mixed.

- Non-metropolitan settlement is associated with better employment outcome, having stable housing and lower risks of being NEET, but higher risks of being discriminated against.

- The improvements in income, English proficiency are slower in non-metropolitan areas, but the probability of having stable housing is greater over time.

- Despite the disparities observed, there is no significant difference in life satisfaction and sense of belonging of humanitarian migrants.

- There is no significant difference in the physical and mental health outcomes of humanitarian migrants between non-metropolitan and metropolitan settlement.

Concluding remark

Limitations

- The proportion of humanitarian migrants in non-metropolitan area is small.

- Coarse spatial data.

- Only one arrival cohort, policy change not considered in other years.

Contributions

- Qualitatively study some objective integration outcomes jointly with subjective outcomes which is not covered by administrative data.

- This research spatially, longitudinally and multidimensionally studied the relationships between settlement location and the integration outcomes of humanitarian migrants in Australia.

Future research

- Administrative data (Multi-Agency Data Integration Project)
  - Finer spatial scales linked to visa status and labour market outcomes
  - Longer time-series (2006- 2021)
  - Over 200,000 humanitarian migrants in MADIP.

MADIP sample

Year	Metropolitan	Proportion	Non-metropolitan	Proportion	Total	Proportion
2006	7,264	90.68	747	9.32	8,011	100
2007	9,935	88.91	1,239	11.09	11,174	100
2008	9,562	89.45	1,128	10.55	10,690	100
2009	12,395	88.89	1,549	11.11	13,944	100
2010	10,169	84.08	1,925	15.92	12,094	100
2011	11,812	85.72	1,967	14.28	13,779	100
2012	11,214	87.34	1,626	12.66	12,840	100
2013	14,394	84.29	2,683	15.71	17,077	100
2014	12,550	87.92	1,725	12.08	14,275	100
2015	10,911	88.57	1,408	11.43	12,319	100
2016	18,279	90.73	1,868	9.27	20,147	100
2017	17,609	88.12	2,373	11.88	19,982	100
2018	10,890	79.75	2,765	20.25	13,655	100
2019	14,514	78.87	3,889	21.13	18,403	100
2020	5,642	80.69	1,350	19.31	6,992	100
Total	177,140	86.25	28,242	13.75	205,382	100

Thank you!

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Descriptive statistics

Table 3. Sample means by urban status of region of residence

	Urban areas	Regional areas	Difference
Labour-market outcomes	19.32	31.68	***
In paid work (%)			
Weekly income	721.46	598.54	***
NEET (%)	26.43	9.69	***
Health outcomes			
Physical health (%)			
Very poor	4.33	3.99	n.s.
Poor	12.10	12.20	n.s.
Fair	21.22	19.81	n.s.
Good	27.96	30.07	n.s.
Very good	19.41	17.51	n.s.
Excellent	14.99	16.43	n.s.
No serious mental illness (%)	82.91	86.17	*
Language proficiency			
English proficiency	1.33	1.30	n.s.
Subjective well-being			
Life satisfaction	7.58	7.85	***
Experienced discrimination (%)	7.33	14.51	***
Sense of belonging (%)			
Never	2.41	2.33	n.s.
Hardly ever	3.32	2.33	n.s.
Some of the time	18.35	19.04	n.s.
Most of the time	25.01	25.80	n.s.
Always	50.92	50.49	n.s.
Housing outcomes			
Having stable housing	68.10	70.19	n.s.
N (Observations)	8,573	828	
N (Individuals)	2,165	267	

Notes: BNLA Waves 1 to 5 (2013-2018). NEET: Not in Employment, Education or Training. Statistical significance from two-sided *t*-tests: * $p<0.05$, ** $p<0.01$, *** $p<0.001$. n.s.: Non-significant.

Descriptive statistics

Appendix A1. Descriptive statistics for socio-demographic variables

Variables	Mean	Obs
Age	36.73	9,401
Gender (%)		
Male	54.08	5,084
Female	45.92	4,317
Employed before coming to Australia (%)		
Yes	53.54	5,033
No	46.46	4,368
Highest educational qualification (%)		
Never attended school/no info	19.37	1,821
6 or less years of schooling	19.43	1,827
7-12+ years of schooling	44.95	4,226
Trade qualification	5.99	563
Degree qualification	10.25	964
Onshore applicant (%)		
Yes	14.51	1,364
No	85.49	8,037
Marital Status (%)		
Married/Partnered	56.30	5,293
Divorced/Separated/Widowed	9.74	916
Single	26.46	2,487
No info.	7.50	705
Country of origin (%)		
Iran	11.06	1,040
Iraq	41.20	3,873
Afghanistan	25.24	2,373
Other countries	22.50	2,115
Children		
0	44.20	4,155
1	18.10	1,702
2	19.21	1,806
3+	18.49	1,738
N (Observations)		9,401
N (Individuals)		2,314

Notes: BNLA Waves 1 to 5 (2013-2018).

Regression results

Outcome variable in the model	(a) Model 1 (unadjusted)	(b) Model 2 (adjusted)	(c) Model 3 (interactive)			Number of observations
			Regional location × Wave interaction	Regional location, main effect	Wave, main effect	
Labour-market outcomes						
Employed (OR)	4.41***	3.59***	0.88	5.29***	2.71***	9,345
Income (β)	−95.81***	−60.96	−54.73*	130.65	98.04***	1,349
NEET (OR)	0.20***	0.34***	0.90	0.48	1.35***	8,290
Health outcomes						
General health (β)	0.09	−0.02	−0.03	0.07	0.05***	9,401
Serious mental illness (OR)	0.67*	1.07	1.18	0.68	0.09***	9,230
Language proficiency and subjective well-being						
Experienced discrimination (OR)	2.71***	2.54***	0.86	3.86***	1.27***	9,274
English proficiency (β)	−0.02	0.03	−0.04***	0.14***	0.12***	9,360
Life satisfaction (β)	0.24*	0.05	−0.07	-0.67	0.13***	7,483
Sense of belonging (β)	0.03	0.01	−0.01	0.44	0.06***	9,256
Housing outcome						
Having stable housing (OR)	1.13	1.40***	1.19**	0.90	1.37***	9,273