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Institute for Social Science Research

CRISP and CSP evaluations:

Integrated findings of Australian Community Settlement Programs

June 2025

This report was commissioned by the Department of Home Affairs to test community-supported settlement models as viable settlement and integration pathways for refugees and humanitarian entrants

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This report was led by the Institute for Social Science Research (ISSR) at The University of Queensland (UQ), in collaboration with the Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS).

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Acronyms

ACRONYM	FULL NAME
AIFS	Australian Institute of Family Studies
AMEP	Adult Migrant English Program
AoS	Assurance of Support
APO	Approved Proposing Organisation
BNLA	Building a New Life in Australia
BVOR	Blended Visa Office-Referred Program
CRISP	Community Refugee Integration and Settlement Pilot
CRSA	Community Refugee Sponsorship Australia
CSG	Community Supporter Group
CSP	Community Support Program
HSP	Humanitarian Settlement Program
ISSR	Institute for Social Science Research
PSR	Private Sponsorship of Refugees
UQ	The University of Queensland
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
VAC	Visa Application Charge

Evaluations of Australia's Community Settlement Programs: CRISP & CSP

SNAPSHOT

WHAT WAS EVALUATED?

Australia's 2 community settlement programs: the new Community Refugee Integration and Settlement Pilot (CRISP) introduced in 2022; and the existing Community Support Program (CSP). These programs were designed to harness the capacity, resources, and social networks of community supporters to provide settlement assistance to refugees for the first 12 months. CRISP provides settlement support via Community Supporter Groups (CSGs) to refugees with no known family links in Australia. CSP is a private sponsorship model that provides settlement support through Australian Supporters and Approved Proposing Organisations (APOs).

PURPOSE OF THE EVALUATIONS

The evaluations aimed to test the effectiveness of the CRISP and CSP, respectively, as successful community-led settlement programs that deliver optimal settlement outcomes for refugees and humanitarian entrants.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that community involvement in refugee resettlement represents a viable and effective approach. With continued refinement and support, these programs have the potential to deliver meaningful, long-term benefits for refugees, host communities, and the broader settlement system.

KEY INSIGHTS

1. Refugees and humanitarian entrants supported through the **community settlement programs (CRISP and CSP) had comparable or better settlement outcomes**—social integration, economic integration, and self-sufficiency—compared to the matched group supported through the government-assisted program (HSP).

2. **Community settlement models fostered social capital,** especially among CRISP refugees. This is important, as the analysis showed that higher social capital was closely linked to more positive settlement outcomes, especially in the short term.

3. The report identified a number of individual and contextual factors that influence positive settlement outcomes. In particular, **higher levels of English proficiency and digital literacy were important for achieving self-sufficiency and economic integration**. For CRISP refugees, lower psychological distress was associated with having a sense of belonging, and location was associated with economic integration.

4. **Regional locations had the capacity and commitment to support settlement outcomes for CRISP refugees.** Refugees settled in regional areas achieved comparable outcomes to those in major cities. Furthermore, CSGs in regional areas found the experience less challenging and had sustained high levels of enjoyment, highlighting the strengths of regional communities in supporting refugee settlement. However, both CRISP refugees and CSGs acknowledged some challenges with accessing specialist and specialised services (including specialised refugee services).

5. **Participation in CRISP resulted in positive outcomes for CSGs**, including increased social connections, deeper understanding of refugee experiences and the settlement landscape, and greater appreciation of refugees' contributions. CSGs reported feeling personally fulfilled and believed their involvement positively influenced broader community attitudes toward refugees, contributing to social cohesion.

6. **The sustainability and scalability of CRISP will depend on both retaining experienced CSG members and recruiting new supporters.** While nearly half of CSG members expressed willingness to support another refugee household, emotional and financial challenges—including fundraising—limited repeat sponsorship. Positive group dynamics, perceived impact, and strong community connections were key drivers of re-engagement. High program endorsement rates and successful refugee outcomes present opportunities to attract new supporters and expand community networks.

7. While **CSP entrants achieved rapid labour market participation, this was often at the expense of English language education and long-term career development, and many experienced occupational downgrading and skills underutilisation.** In addition, lengthy visa processing times make it unviable for employers to provide job offers in relevant industries or to commit to sponsorship themselves. Consequently, the program functioned more like a family reunification pathway. Together, these factors raise questions about the program's viability as an employment-focused pathway and its suitability as a mechanism for meaningful integration.

KEY OUTCOMES 10–12 MONTHS AFTER ARRIVAL

Refugees and humanitarian entrants

Social integration
Felt part of the local community

87% CRISP (77% HSP1)

91% CSP (86% HSP2)

82% BNLA* 2–3 years after arrival

Economic integration
Worked for pay (previous 4 weeks)

24% CRISP (11% HSP1)

67% CSP (15% HSP2)

17% BNLA 2–3 years after arrival

Studied English
Since arriving in Australia

97% CRISP (83% HSP1)

41% CSP (88% HSP2)

**Results are from additional analyses of the Building a New Life in Australia (BNLA) data.*

Community Supporter Groups

Fulfilment
91% CSGs found supporting the refugee household rewarding

Social connections
76% CSGs made friends with the refugee household

Social impact
91% CSGs felt their group had a positive influence on the way others in their community treat refugees

Challenging
76% CSGs found supporting the refugee household challenging

Regional locations

Refugees in regional areas reported a similar sense of belonging and achieved notably higher employment rates compared to those in major cities. However, they faced some difficulties accessing specialist services.

Social integration
Found it easy to make friends with people in the local community with different backgrounds

97% REGIONAL CRISP

84% MAJOR CITIES CRISP

Economic integration
Worked for pay (previous 4 weeks)

46% REGIONAL CRISP

12% MAJOR CITIES CRISP

Access to healthcare
Found it difficult to access other health professionals (e.g., specialists, psychologist, dentist)

39% REGIONAL CRISP

22% MAJOR CITIES CRISP

CSGs in regional areas found the experience less challenging and continued to find it enjoyable compared to those in major cities. Further, CSGs in regional areas were more likely to be willing to support additional refugee households in the future.

Enjoyable
86% REGIONAL CSGs

73% MAJOR CITIES CSGs

Challenging
63% REGIONAL CSGs

80% MAJOR CITIES CSGs

Willing to support another household
61% REGIONAL CSGs

44% MAJOR CITIES CSGs

RECOMMENDATIONS

12 RECOMMENDATIONS were proposed in response to the findings (see Chapter 9).

Executive summary

Community settlement programs have emerged as an innovative approach to refugee resettlement internationally. Evidence from these programs highlight the positive outcomes and experiences for refugees supported through models that harness the capacity, resources, and social networks of local communities.

This report, prepared for the Department of Home Affairs, integrates findings from the evaluations of Australia's 2 community settlement programs to assess and provide insights of the viability and effectiveness of community resettlement in Australia.

In December 2021, the Australian Minister for Immigration, Citizenship, Migrant Services and Multicultural Affairs announced reforms to Australia's resettlement program to enhance the support that refugees receive in their settlement and integration. Changes included reforms to the existing Community Support Program (CSP) that enables community members to support named humanitarian entrants in their resettlement in Australia. As well as the introduction of a new program, the Community Refugee Integration and Settlement Pilot (CRISP), to provide a resettlement pathway for UNHCR-identified refugees with no pre-existing family connections in Australia, by enabling community supporter groups (CSGs) to provide settlement support.

In 2022, the Department of Home Affairs commissioned researchers from the Institute of Social Science Research (ISSR), at The University of Queensland (UQ), in collaboration with the Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS), **to evaluate the viability and effectiveness of the CRISP and CSP programs to deliver optimal settlement outcomes for refugees and humanitarian entrants.**

This report presents integrated findings and additional analyses from the respective CRISP and CSP evaluations to provide insights into Australia's community settlement programs. It is complemented by the *CRISP Evaluation Program Outcomes* and *CSP Evaluation Program Outcomes* reports which present comprehensive results of the settlement and integration outcomes of the respective programs' evaluations.

The CRISP and CSP evaluations employed a quasi-experimental (matched control) and pre-post research design, integrating mixed methods. By comparing outcomes and experiences with a matched control group from the government-assisted program, Humanitarian Settlement Program (HSP), the evaluations were able to assess the extent to which observed outcomes were attributable to the programs themselves, rather than individual characteristics. Drawing on multiple sources of qualitative and quantitative data, the report synthesised findings to provide a comprehensive understanding of outcomes and implementation across both programs.

Summary of key findings

Overall, the findings demonstrate that refugees and entrants who settled through community-led programs achieved outcomes that were comparable to—and in many cases exceeded—those supported through the government-assisted HSP pathway.

These results are consistent with international evidence and underscore the value of community involvement in refugee resettlement. A notable strength of community settlement models was the social capital observed, especially among CRISP refugees—that is, the social networks and relationships that facilitate access to resources and support. Strong community networks fostered a sense of belonging, self-sufficiency, and economic integration.

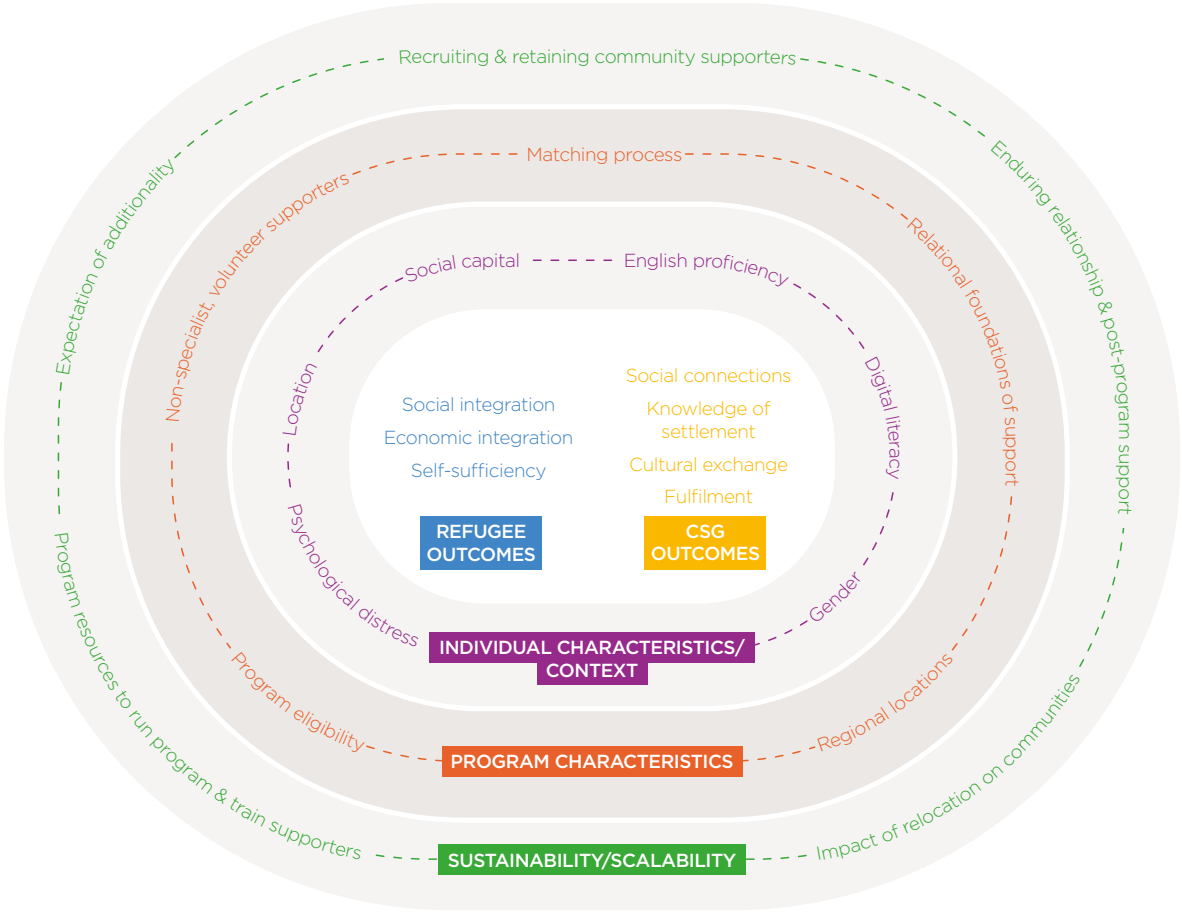
The positive outcomes for CSGs as a result of participating in CRISP were also demonstrated. These included new social connections and feeling fulfilled, a deeper understanding of refugee experiences and the settlement landscape, and a greater appreciation of refugees' contributions.

In addition to outcome analysis, the report examined features of the programs and factors that influence the sustainability and scalability of community settlement programs to inform future policy and practice. It highlighted the interconnected factors that impact a program's ability to deliver sustainable and scalable settlement outcomes.

Figure A, structured and colour-coded according to the chapters in the report, draws on the evaluation findings to visualise the complex system that community settlement programs operate within and the interconnected factors that impact the viability and effectiveness of community settlement programs in Australia.

In sum, community involvement in refugee resettlement represents a viable and effective approach. With continued refinement and support, these programs have the potential to deliver meaningful, long-term benefits for refugees, host communities, and the broader settlement system.

Figure A. *Factors that impact the viability and effectiveness of Australia's community settlement programs*



The colours used in Figure A correspond to the chapters in the report, functioning as visual signposts to facilitate navigation to the relevant findings and discussions.

Summary recommendations

In response to the findings, the following recommendations were proposed.

See Chapter 9 for full recommendations, aligned with the program(s) they are intended to address.

1. Onshore orientation for CRISP refugees.
2. Strengthen regional capacity to provide refugee-specific services.
3. CSG access to professional supports.
4. Share detailed information about prospective CRISP refugees to strengthen matching process.
5. Diversify refugee households identified and referred to CRISP.
6. Ensure CRISP provider is resourced to provide ongoing tailored support to CSGs.
7. Facilitate CRISP promotion, leveraging positive experiences and outcomes.
8. Review CSP viability as an employment pathway.
9. Consider making CSP a complementary pathway (additional) and monitor whether a lack of additionality impacts the sustainability of CRISP.
10. Fund community settlement providers to collect quality data and facilitate longitudinal monitoring and research to understand programs' long-term impact.
11. AMEP programs tailored for working refugees and humanitarian entrants.
12. Digital literacy programs for refugees and humanitarian entrants.

1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose of this report

This report, prepared for the Department of Home Affairs, integrates findings from the respective **Community Refugee Integration and Settlement Pilot (CRISP)** and **Community Support Program (CSP)** evaluations to provide insights into Australia's community settlement programs. The report complements and should be read in conjunction with the ***CRISP Evaluation Program Outcomes report*** (Povey et al., 2025) and the ***CSP Evaluation Program Outcomes report*** (Burger et al., 2024), which present comprehensive results of the settlement and integration outcomes of the respective programs' evaluations.

1.2 Background

Australia has a long tradition of resettling refugees and displaced persons, with over 950,000 individuals resettled in Australia since World War II (Department of Home Affairs, 2021a). As part of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees' (UNHCR) resettlement program, Australia accepts a defined number of refugees each year, with 13,750 places allocated to the Refugee and Humanitarian Program for 2021–22 and 20,000 places for 2024–25. Humanitarian migrants have historically made substantial contributions to Australian society in diverse areas, including economic and social participation (Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 2011). However, refugees face multiple challenges in their efforts to integrate into Australian society. Challenges include difficulties with English language, affordable housing (De Maio et al., 2017), and a lack of employment opportunities (Perales et al., 2021), as well as discrimination, loneliness, and adjusting to life in Australia (Chen et al., 2017). Difficulties with settlement and integration can negatively impact refugees' health and wellbeing (Chen et al., 2017; De Maio et al., 2017; Perales et al., 2021; van Kooy et al., 2024). The immediate post-settlement period is particularly important in determining long-term integration outcomes. Difficulties during this time can have long-term impacts on refugees' mental health and financial wellbeing (O'Donnell et al., 2020; van Kooy et al., 2025). This highlights the important role of settlement programs early in the integration process (Department of Home Affairs, n.d.). As stated in the Australian National Settlement Framework, most new arrivals need support to achieve positive settlement and integration outcomes (Department of Home Affairs, n.d.; Settlement Council of Australia, 2020). Positive settlement and integration outcomes may be defined as a sense of belonging to the host community and access to equal rights and opportunities in the social, economic, and cultural life of the community in which they settle. In this context, effective policy and program responses to support humanitarian migrants' settlement and integration are paramount; ensuring efficient use of resources to achieve the best possible outcomes for those who start a new life in Australia not only benefits refugees themselves but also maximises the valuable contributions that refugees make to Australian society.

Community settlement programs, involving private sponsorship and community sponsorship, have been successful in other countries, such as Canada, where they have resettled over 368,000 refugees via their Private Sponsorship of Refugees (PSR) program (Van Haren, 2021). Evidence from these programs has highlighted that refugees supported by these models achieve economic outcomes comparatively quicker than those supported through government programs (Gure & Hou, 2024) and lead to better integration outcomes for refugees (e.g., social connections, language acquisition, and economic participation) (Kaida et al., 2020). The importance of community engagement and connection is a key feature of the success of the Canadian private sponsorship program (Hynie et al., 2019).

Australia's **Humanitarian Settlement Program (HSP)**, administered by the Department of Home Affairs since 2019,[1] provides refugees and humanitarian entrants services to support their initial settlement and integration.[2] In 2019, an independent review of the integration, employment, and settlement outcomes of refugees and humanitarian entrants was conducted (*Shergold Review*). The findings recognised that improvements to the existing settlement programs and services provided to refugees and humanitarian entrants were required (Shergold et al., 2019). The review highlighted the potential for programs to increase and accelerate the process of integration and, therefore, the wellbeing of refugees and the contributions that they can make to Australian society.

One area that the *Shergold Review* highlighted that could be improved was the **Community Support Program (CSP)**, which is a community settlement pathway to settle humanitarian entrants. The CSP aimed to allow communities, businesses, and individuals **(Australian Supporters)** to sponsor named humanitarian visa applicants and provide practical support post-settlement. In response to the *Shergold Review,* a review of the existing CSP was conducted by the Commonwealth Coordinator-General for Migrant Services in 2020–21 (Department of Home Affairs, 2021b). Findings mirrored those set out in *the Shergold Review* and indicated several areas for improvement. In particular, the cost of CSP was considered a significant barrier. Additionally, CSP was mainly used as a means for family reunion, despite the high demand for resettlement places among refugees with no pre-existing connections to Australia. These pre-existing connections often resulted in settlement in the big cities where the (mostly family) sponsors/diaspora groups live. Furthermore, CSP did not harness involvement from the broader community despite the strong willingness to support refugee resettlement across Australian communities.

In December 2021, the Minister for Immigration, Citizenship, Migrant Services and Multicultural Affairs announced reforms to Australia's resettlement program to enhance the support that refugees receive in their settlement and integration (Hawke, 2021). Changes included lowering the cost for CSP[3] and the introduction of a new program, the **Community Refugee Integration and Settlement Pilot (CRISP)**, to provide a resettlement pathway for UNHCR-identified refugees with no pre-existing connections to Australia (Department of Home Affairs, 2021c; Hawke, 2021). The CRISP program aimed to address some of the difficulties identified by the CSP review and provide a community-sponsored migration pathway to refugees who do not have family links in Australia. CRISP refugees would receive settlement support from trained Australian volunteers known as **Community Supporter Groups (CSGs)**, who provide comprehensive settlement assistance to refugees for the first 12 months.

The pilot program (CRISP) was set to support a total of 1,500 refugees granted visas under the Refugee category of the Humanitarian Program, and was initially set to run for 4 years, from the financial year 2021–22 to 2024–25, and was extended to June 2026. The CRISP was co-designed by the Department of Home Affairs (the Department) and **Community Refugee Sponsorship Australia (CRSA)**, who were contracted to implement the CRISP. The process included co-design workshops attended by key stakeholders from the Department, CRSA, and where relevant, researchers from the Institute of Social Science Research (ISSR), at The University of Queensland (UQ) and the Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS), and a Child Safety expert to collaboratively plan and develop the CRISP. A full description of each program is presented in Section 2.1, as well as the supplementary *CSP* and *CRISP Evaluation Program Outcomes* reports.

[1] The Humanitarian Settlement Program was previously administered by the Department of Social Services.

[2] Other services available to refugees and humanitarian entrants from the Australian Commonwealth Government include the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS), the Australian Cultural Orientation Program (AUSCO), Settlement Engagement and Transition Support (SETS), and the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP). Other Commonwealth and State Government support is also provided through mainstream welfare, health, education, and employment services.

[3] In 2022–23, the Australian Government implemented changes to improve the accessibility of the CSP following a review of the CSP. The reformed CSP included reducing the Visa Application Charge (VAC) for primary applicants and removing the VAC for secondary applicants. In addition, changes were made to the AoS—from 1 July 2022, the number of CSP entrants an individual or body can sponsor under an AoS increased: from 2 to 4 adults (no limit on children) for individuals; and from 2 to 15 adults for bodies (no limit on children).

1.3 CRISP and CSP evaluations

In 2022, the Department commissioned researchers from ISSR at UQ, in collaboration with AIFS, to evaluate the effectiveness of the CRISP and CSP, respectively, as successful community-led settlement programs that deliver optimal settlement outcomes for refugees and humanitarian entrants.

This report presents integrated findings and additional analyses from the respective CRISP and CSP evaluations to provide insights into Australia's community settlement programs and contextualise these findings in the international context.

1.4 Evaluation design

The CRISP and CSP evaluations aimed to test the effectiveness of the respective programs in achieving strong settlement and integration outcomes for refugees compared to humanitarian entrants receiving services through the existing HSP pathway. As a new program, the CRISP evaluation specifically aimed to test whether such a model was a viable settlement support pathway to complement the existing HSP pathway. The CRISP evaluation followed a **developmental approach**—a flexible approach that enabled adaptations to the pilot and evaluation based on the needs of the program and early evaluation findings. The CSP evaluation included a small sample with a matched control group to enable a comparison across the community settlement programs to inform future policy design of CSP or future programs.

The evaluations were guided by the co-developed *Evaluation Framework and Plan* (the Framework), which included the Theory of Change that details the mechanism(s) of change and the underlying assumptions of the programs. The underlying theories that the CRISP and CSP evaluations draw on are **social capital,**[1] **life course**,[2] **and ecological systems theories**[3] that explain how refugees and entrants access or fail to access the social resources and networks needed to integrate into the various micro-systems in which they settle. The Framework also included the co-developed CRISP Program Logic, a visual representation of the Theory of Change that illustrates the sequence of events (and intermediate outcomes) required to achieve the program's outcomes and goal. The CRISP Program Logic served as the architecture for the evaluation, informing the development of meaningful evaluation questions, and the outcomes that need to be assessed to determine the effectiveness of the programs (i.e., did it meet its goals).

[1] Social capital theory explores how social networks and relationships benefit individuals and communities by creating access to resources and opportunities (Bourdieu, 1986)

[2] Life course theory suggests that an individual's life is influenced by time, context, transitions and links with significant others, and that interventions should be tailored accordingly.

[3] Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory suggests that an individual's environment plays a key role in human development. Individuals live in environments composed of multiple overlapping contexts and settings that are related and influence each other.

1.5 Methodology

Both evaluations employed a **quasi-experimental** (matched control)[4] and **pre-post research design,** integrating **mixed methods.** Broadly, the outcomes for CRISP refugees and CSP entrants were compared to the outcomes of HSP refugees or entrants, respectively, with comparable or 'matched' characteristics at 2 timepoints. Data were collected on a rolling basis as refugees and entrants arrived in Australia. Timepoint 1 (T1) data were collected approximately 1–3 months after refugees and entrants arrived in Australia, and timepoint 2 (T2) data were collected 10+ months after arrival.

Figure 1 provides a high-level overview of the methodology, including the matching characteristics, data collection period, data sources, methods, and sample sizes.

[4] To examine whether the outcomes and/or experiences of the CRISP refugees or CSP entrants were due to the program, rather than external factors or individual characteristics, a matched control group was used to compare outcomes.

Figure 1. *CRISP and CSP Evaluation methodology*

Approach

Quasi-experimental (matched control) pre-post design employing mixed methods

CRISP & CSP MATCHING CRITERIA
Unlinked (no known family in Australia), family type, country of origin

CSP & HSP MATCHING CRITERIA
Linked (know someone in Australia), aged 18-50 years, family type, country of origin

Data sources

REFUGEES/ ENTRANTS

- **Pre- & post surveys:** Mixed-mode* survey at T1 & T2
- **Administrative data:** Demographic data from application
- **Pre- & post in-depth interviews:** 60-minute semi-structured interview at T1 & T2

COMMUNITY SUPPORTERS

- **CSG pre- & post surveys:** Online survey at T1 & T2
- **CSG pre- & post focus groups:** 90-minute semi-structured focus group at T1 & T2
- **CSG administrative data:** Demographic data from application
- **Australian Supporters in-depth interviews:** 60-minute semi-structured interview 10 – 12 months after CSP entrant arrived in Australia

PROGRAM ADMINISTRATORS

- **CRSA focus group:** 4-hour semi-structured focus group with CRSA staff in May 2025
- **APO focus group:** 90-minute semi-structured focus group with APO staff in July 2023

Sampling

CRISP Evaluation

ARRIVAL DATES
24 August 2022 to 29 March 2024

Two adults from each CRISP and HSP household were invited to participate in the evaluation

All CSG members were invited to participate in the evaluation

CSP Evaluation

ARRIVAL DATES
24 August 2022 to 14 October 2023

Cohort 1:** All adult CSP entrants who arrived between 24 Aug 2022 and 17 Aug 2023 and the matched HSP entrants were eligible

Cohort 2: One adult from CSP households who arrived between 2 Sept and 14 Oct 2023 were purposively selected

Data collection & sample

REFUGEES/ ENTRANTS

T1 & T2 surveys
106 CRISP (69 households)
123 HSP (79 households)

T1 & T2 in-depth interviews
28 CRISP (2 did T1 only)
28 HSP (4 did T1 only)

Relocation in-depth interviews
6 CRISP

T1 & T2 Surveys
46 CSP
33 HSP

T1 & T2 in-depth interviews
12 CSP (3 did T1 only)
12 HSP (2 did T1 only)

COMMUNITY SUPPORTERS

T1 & T2 surveys
228 CSG members (238 surveys)
77 CSGs supporting 83 households

Focus groups
14 CSGs
Supporting 15 households (1 CSG at T1 only)

In-depth interviews 10-12 months post arrival
13 Australian Supporters participated in in-depth interviews

PROGRAM ADMINISTRATORS

1 focus group with CRSA staff

1 focus group with 19 staff from 10 APOs

**CRISP/HSP1 completed survey via Computed Assisted Telephone Interview (CATI); CSP/HSP2 completed online or via CATI survey.*
***Cohort 1 completed T1 survey online, and T2 survey via CATI. Cohort 2, completed T1 & T2 survey via CATI.*

1.6 Mixed-methods synthesis

A mixed-methods synthesis was employed to integrate findings from across the evaluations and data sources. This included drawing on the descriptive quantitative results and qualitative findings presented in the respective *CRISP* and *CSP Evaluation Program Outcomes* reports and additional bivariate statistical tests[1] and multiple regression analyses to understand which factors influence optimal settlement outcomes. It should be noted that the respective *CRISP* and *CSP Evaluation Program Outcomes* reports present findings over time (i.e., results at T1 and T2), as such, those analyses were restricted to refugees/entrants who responded to a specific survey question in both surveys, allowing for accurate comparisons over time. In contrast, the additional bivariate and multiple regression analyses conducted for this report focused on results 10–12 months after arrival (T2). Therefore, data from all refugees/entrants who responded at T2 were included, regardless of whether they responded at T1. As a result, the analytic samples differ slightly between reports.

To provide insights into the potential longer-term outcomes for refugees and humanitarian entrants—beyond the initial 12-month evaluation period—the report also integrated additional analyses from the Longitudinal Study of Humanitarian Migrants (2013–2023), known as the **Building a New Life in Australia (BNLA).** The BNLA was commissioned by the (then) Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) in 2012 to provide the Australian Government with 'a broad ranging evidence base to assist policy development and program improvement for humanitarian migrants' (DIAC, 2012). The sample (n=2,399) includes individuals or families who were granted permanent visas through Australia's Humanitarian Program (both offshore and onshore) between May and December 2013.

To enable comparisons to the CSP and CRISP programs on the key settlement outcomes, a sub-sample of the BNLA participants was selected—migrants who arrived via the offshore pathway and completed the Wave 1 (3–5 months after arrival), Wave 3 (2–3 years after arrival), and Wave 5 surveys (4 years after arrival) n=1,470.

Important differences between the BNLA sub-sample and the CRISP and CSP samples must be acknowledged when making any direct comparisons of outcomes. BNLA migrants arrived approximately 10 years prior to CRISP refugees and CSP entrants included in the valuations, under a different set of immigration and settlement policies, and with access to a different array of settlement support services. The BNLA sub-sample has both more young people (under 25 years) and more older people (over 55 years) relative to the CRISP and CSP samples. The difference in age distribution has implications for labour force participation and English proficiency. Nevertheless, drawing on the data from 3 waves from the BNLA study provides the opportunity to glean insights about what may be expected over a longer period for the settlement and integration of the CRISP refugees and CSP entrants.

[1] Bivariate analysis was used to explore if and how 2 variables were related. Multiple regression analysis was used to examine the relationship between an outcome and multiple factors at once, to estimate the independent effect of each factor while accounting for the influence of others.

1.7 Strengths, limitations, and interpretation

A strength of the CRISP and CSP evaluations was the ability to test the viability and effectiveness of Australia's community settlement programs to deliver optimal settlement outcomes for refugees and humanitarian entrants over time, compared to those with similar characteristics who were supported via Australia's primary government-assisted program, HSP. This allowed for analyses to examine whether the outcomes and/or experiences of the CRISP refugees or CSP entrants were due to the programs, rather than external factors or individual characteristics. The qualitative data (in-depth interviews and focus groups) also provided rich insights into the experiences and perceptions of refugees/entrants and community supporters.

Another strength was the use of a broadly consistent methodological approach across both the CRISP and CSP evaluations. By collecting comparable data from participants in each program, findings could be integrated to provide a comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness, challenges, and opportunities of Australia's community settlement initiatives.

However, some key limitations need to be taken into consideration when reviewing the results.

Data coverage and representativeness: A notable strength of the CRISP evaluation was the representation in the final sample, which included 70% of the first 99 refugee households who arrived through the pilot and representation from 80% of CSGs. In contrast, the number of CSP (and matched HSP) entrants who participated in the CSP evaluation was relatively small,[1] thus lacked the statistical power to reliably represent the population (generalisability) and outliers may have disproportionally influenced the results. While analyses indicated that the CSP entrants in the evaluation sample were broadly comparable to the CSP population, results should be interpreted with caution.

Analytical depth and integration of findings: The sample size for the CRISP evaluation enabled advanced statistical analyses to be conducted. In contrast, the limited CSP sample sizes restricted the more advanced statistical analyses that could be undertaken. Similarly, the CRISP evaluation collected data from CSGs over time via online surveys and in-depth focus groups, providing comprehensive insights into the experiences and outcomes of the community supporters, and the potential mechanisms that may have influenced how the program operated and settlement outcomes. Whereas, owing to challenges in collecting the equivalent information, the CSP evaluation drew on in-depth interviews with Australian Supporters at timepoint 2 only. Thus, there is not the same breadth of data from Australian Supporters compared to CSGs. Some insights—particularly those derived from more sophisticated analyses—therefore rely more, or entirely, on the results from the CRISP data. This should be considered when interpreting integrated findings, particularly where conclusions are drawn across both programs.

[1] The CSP evaluation included n=46 CSP entrants. The total number of CSP adults who arrived in Australia during the recruitment period was n=922. See *CSP Evaluation Program Outcomes report* for more detail on the CSP population and sampling

Adaptations to methods and tools: Necessary adaptations to the methods[2] were introduced based on insights gained over the course of the evaluations. As such, new questions were introduced part way through the data collection, e.g., questions related to any workforce participation since arriving in Australia. This meant that not all refugees or entrants were asked these questions and the number of responses are not from all refugees and entrants, thus findings need to be interpreted with caution.

Timing of CSP evaluation data collection: The CSP evaluation aimed to test the effectiveness of CSP, particularly since the reforms to the program were introduced in July 2022 (including the reduced cost). However, owing to the processing time of CSP visas, the majority (10 of 13) of Australian Supporters who participated in the CSP evaluation (i.e., supported a CSP household who arrived between 24 August 2022–14 October 2023) had lodged the CSP application prior to the changes coming into effect. As such, most Australian Supporters' experiences and perceptions of the program were not from the reformed CSP, and the CSP evaluation had limited data to explore the impact of the changes to the CSP program.

Program comparisons: The CRISP and CSP programs have distinct eligibility criteria, which means that the characteristics of individuals entering each program differ in important ways. That is, primary applicants for CSP are required to meet specific criteria (aged 18–50, having English language proficiency, and

[2] The CSP evaluation initially employed an online survey mode distributed to all eligible adult CSP entrants via their APO (Cohort 1). The rationale for the online mode was 3-fold: as a more established program, the population (i.e., number of eligible CSP entrants) was large and the online mode was a cost-effective way to gather data from as many participants as possible; it was assumed that CSP entrants would be more digitally literate in their own language or have a higher level of English proficiency due to the visa requirements thus the online mode would be appropriate; as many CSP entrants were likely to be working, the online survey mode would allow them to complete the survey in their own time. However, the recruitment method yielded a low response rate, as such, a CATI survey mode was employed with a fixed number of purposively selected sample (Cohort 2).

demonstrate employment prospects), that do not apply to CRISP refugees. As a result, differences in outcomes between the 2 groups may reflect underlying differences in participant profiles rather than program effects, and direct comparisons should be tempered.

In addition, the HSP refugees and entrants included in the evaluations were selected as a matched comparison for the CRISP and CSP evaluations, respectively. That is, they were selected based on their similarity to CRISP refugees or CSP entrants, rather than being representative of the broader HSP population. Consequently, findings related to HSP refugees or entrants should not be interpreted as indicative of outcomes under the HSP program more generally. Instead, these matched groups served as a control to help assess whether observed outcomes for CRISP refugees and CSP entrants were attributable to the programs themselves, rather than to individual characteristics or external factors.

Matched control: A matched control group among HSP refugees and entrants were selected using key characteristics of CRISP refugees and CSP entrants respectively. However, selecting the comparison group was limited to the information available and being able to find individuals with similar characteristics. For CRISP, HSP refugees with similar characteristics to a specific CRISP household were selected. Whereas for CSP, a roughly equal number of adult HSP entrants who arrived within 3-months of the sampling period for CSP entrants, who broadly had similar characteristics (coarse matching), were selected. It is possible that the HSP refugees and entrants who were selected for the evaluations were different to their comparators in ways that could not be observed from the available data (e.g., personality traits, mental health). Analyses were conducted that indicated that the demographic characteristics of those in the final respective samples were broadly similar, however, the possibility that unobserved differences could impact the settlement outcomes cannot be ruled out.

Data sources and measurement of outcomes: A key strength of the CRISP and CSP evaluations was the ability to collect rich, first-hand data from a range of stakeholders, including refugees, entrants, and community supporters, providing a comprehensive view of participant experiences and perceived outcomes. However, all outcome data were self-reported, and no administrative data sources—such as Australian Taxation Office records or other government datasets—were accessed to independently verify or supplement these reports. As a result, measures of key outcomes such as employment or service use rely solely on participant accounts. While self-reported data offer valuable insights into lived experience, they may be subject to recall bias, social desirability bias, or inaccuracies in reporting. This limitation should be considered when interpreting findings.

Use of Interpreters in data collection: Interpreters were engaged to support data collection across both evaluations, including during the administration of CATI surveys and the conduct of in-depth interviews. This enabled the inclusion of participants with limited English proficiency and helped ensure that a diverse range of voices and experiences were captured. However, the use of interpreters introduces certain limitations. The accuracy and consistency of data collection are inherently reliant on interpreters acting as conduits for both the interviewers/surveyors and participants' responses. While efforts were made to ensure high-quality interpretation, there is always a risk that questions may not have been conveyed exactly as intended, or that nuances in participant responses may have been lost or altered in translation. These factors may have influenced how participants understood and responded to questions, and should be considered when interpreting the findings.

2. Situating Australia's community settlement programs: An international comparison

This chapter outlines Australia's 2 community settlement programs—the CSP and CRISP— and situates them within the broader international context by presenting distinctive features and similarities to 7 countries' community settlement programs.

Community settlement models (see Box 2) have emerged as innovative approaches to refugee resettlement internationally. Broadly, community settlement refers to a private/public partnership between civilians and governments aiming to facilitate the admission and/or integration of refugees (Macklin et al., 2018; Tan, 2021) and represents an evolving policy approach that mobilises and engages civil society directly in refugee resettlement and integration. These programs shift the traditional paradigm of refugee resettlement from a purely government-led process to one that harnesses the capacity, resources, and social networks of local communities, based on the premise that it can have both inward and outward-facing benefits. At their core, these models enable individuals, groups of individuals, and organisations to provide practical elements of support to newly arrived refugees or humanitarian entrants during their initial settlement, as well as benefiting refugees and community supporters through building social connections and cultural knowledge exchange while also influencing the broader communities and localities in which they live to create welcome, tolerance, and inclusion (Bond, 2021; Morris et al., 2021; Soehl & Van Haren, 2023).

Canada has the most established and longest-running community settlement scheme, having pioneered and implemented the approach since the late 1970s (Helly & Martani, 2021; Martani & Helly, 2022). Their Private Sponsorship of Refugees (PSR) program has served as a flagship for other countries (Bertram et al., 2020; Cameron, 2025), who have developed, piloted, and implemented their own models, each with distinctive features reflecting particular policy priorities, resettlement infrastructure, and socio-political contexts (Bond & Kwadrans, 2019). There has been particular momentum since the Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative (GRSI) began in 2017,[1] and the Global Compact on Refugees explicitly recognised the potential of these programs to expand resettlement opportunities and enhance integration outcomes (Bond & Maniatis, 2022; UNHCR, 2018).

This chapter first outlines the CRISP and CSP, then presents comparison to 7 countries' community settlement programs.

[1] GRSI is a joint initiative led by the Government of Canada, the UNHCR, The Giustra Foundation, the Open Society Foundations, The Shapiro Foundation, the University of Ottawa Refugee Hub, Porticus and Robert Bosch Stiftung. The GRSI works to encourage and support the adoption and expansion of community sponsorship programs worldwide.

Box 2: For the purposes of this report, community settlement programs/models are referred to as an umbrella term for community sponsorship and private sponsorship. While both involve local communities providing support to newly arrived individuals, the UNHCR (n. d.) distinguishes that private sponsorship involves sponsors 'identifying and selecting the beneficiaries', whereas community sponsorship sees individuals/communities providing support to individuals who have already been identified and admitted independently through a referral by UNHCR or other similar pathway.

2.1 Overview of Australia's community settlement programs

Australia has 2 distinct community settlement programs with different underlying principles. **The CSP**, introduced as a permanent program in 2017, is a community settlement model (or private sponsorship model) that allows individuals, families, communities, and businesses (known as Australian Supporters) to support humanitarian visa applicants with employment prospects and are known/named by their Australian Supporter at the time of the application. The CSP promotes the resettlement of people who are capable of supporting themselves by the end of their first year in Australia. Applicants must meet the criteria for a Global Special Humanitarian visa (Subclass 202), which includes that individuals face/are subject to substantial discrimination or human rights abuses in their home country. In addition, applicants must be outside their home country, and the primary applicant must be aged between 18 and 50, have adequate English language proficiency, and have a job offer, employment pathway, or personal attributes that would enable them to become financially self-sufficient within 12 months of arrival. The Department of Home Affairs commissioned 11 **Approved Proposing Organisations (APOs)** to manage and implement CSP. Potential Australian Supporters (and applicants) must apply through and work with an APO who is responsible for screening the applicant against the eligibility criteria, assisting with preparing and lodging the application, and ensuring the applicant receives settlement services in Australia. APOs charge varying fees, over and above the VAC, to cover the cost of their services. Australian Supporters are required to fund the CSP applicant's visa process and pre-arrival costs, including the VAC, APO fees, travel, medical screening,

and costs associated with settlement in Australia (such as accommodation, essential items). CSP entrants are entitled to Medicare and free Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) immediately on arrival in Australia. However, Australian Supporters are required to provide an Assurance of Support (AoS) whereby the assurer agrees to repay the Australian Government for any working-age social security payments that the Government makes to the CSP entrant during the first year in Australia.

The newer **CRISP program** is a community settlement program for refugees who do not have links in Australia (i.e., no known family in Australia). CRISP refugees receive settlement support from a group of trained Australian volunteers (CSGs), who provide comprehensive settlement assistance to refugees for the first 12 months. Officially launched on 1 July 2022, following a collaborative co-design phase between the Department of Home Affairs and CRSA—an independent Australian charity dedicated to establishing programs that enable community sponsorship of refugees nationwide—the first refugee household arrived in August 2022.

Refugees need to be identified and referred by the UNHCR as being in most urgent need of resettlement and meet Australia's humanitarian visa criteria. Refugees who are offshore and have been granted an Australian refugee visa are assessed for CRISP by the Department of Home Affairs, and if deemed eligible, are offered the option to settle through CRISP. Those who are not eligible or who do not consent to CRISP are settled under the HSP, Australia's primary refugee government-funded program that provides support to humanitarian entrants and other eligible visa holders during their initial settlement in Australia.

The Department of Home Affairs commissioned CRSA to implement the CRISP, including being responsible for recruiting and supporting the CSGs through training, resources, guidance, and troubleshooting throughout the support period. Similar to CSP, CRISP refugees are entitled to access Medicare and the free AMEP to improve their English, however, CRISP refugees may also access Government income support if required. Should the needs of CRISP households exceed the capacity of their CSG, or if the refugee household relocates, they can be referred to the HSP for settlement support.

2.2 International comparison

Table 1 provides a high-level comparison of community settlement programs' features across 8 countries—Australia, Canada, the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Ireland, New Zealand, Argentina, and Germany.

The table highlights features that are similar across most programs, such as the length of time community supporters are expected to provide support to newcomers (minimum program length) is generally 12 months. Further, most programs require there to be a minimum of 5 individuals who jointly provide support (minimum community group size). Almost all programs that support unlinked refugees (i.e., refugees are unknown to the community supporters prior to arrival) have governments providing income support to refugees (at least initially) if required, seeing more of a balanced cost-sharing arrangement between governments and supporters. Whereas programs where community supporters sponsor linked or named refugees (i.e., sponsors identify individuals they wish to support), the financial responsibility to support

refugees post-arrival is borne by the community supporters (though, in many cases, governments do provide access to other services such as healthcare).

Both Australian community settlement programs have similarities to, and distinctive features that differentiate them from, their international counterparts. The CSP, while it shares similarities with other established programs, has unique features making it distinctive in the global landscape. Similar to other programs such as Canada's PSR, CSP operates as a named sponsorship (or private sponsorship) model, where supporters identify specific individuals for support, and supporters assume primary financial responsibility for post-arrival settlement. However, unlike most other similar established international models that prioritise humanitarian protection, the CSP also emphasises economic integration using restrictive eligibility criteria for primary applicants (age, English proficiency, employment prospects). Further, the model has high pre-arrival financial obligations for supporters, including visa fees, airfares, and medical screening—expenses that are usually government-funded, or have government loans available to refugees like Canada's PSR. Procedurally, CSP requires supporters to work through APOs, which incurs organisational fees pre- and post-arrival, along with providing a formal AoS to the government.

In contrast, Australia's newer CRISP initiative, launched in 2022, more closely aligns with international models such as the Canadian Blended Visa Office-Referred (BVOR), the United Kingdom's Community Sponsorship, and New Zealand's Community Organisation Refugee Sponsorship (CORS) program. Like these programs, CRISP accepts UNHCR-referred refugees, focusing on humanitarian needs rather than selectivity based on connections and skills, who are matched to community supporters (i.e., refugees and supporters are unknown to each other pre-arrival). CRISP also adopts a balanced cost-sharing approach, with the Australian government covering pre-arrival costs, such as health assessments and travel, and social security or income support payments, while community sponsors provide housing, orientation, and social integration support for 12 months.

Overall, Australia's bifurcated approach positions it uniquely within the global community sponsorship landscape. Of the countries included here, only Canada and, until February 2025, the USA[1] also implemented a dual-track where community supporters could name individuals (linked) they would like to support/sponsor, or community supporters offer to provide support to refugees unknown to them prior to arrival (unlinked).

[1] As of February 2025, the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) as well as Welcome Corps was suspended until further notice.

Table 1. *International comparison of community settlement programs' key features*

Country	Program	Minimum program length	Minimum Community Group size	UNHCR-referred refugees	Additionality[a]	Linked/ named[b]	Unlinked/ unknown[c]	Govt. pays pre-arrival costs e.g. visa/travel	Eligible for govt income support
Australia	Community Refugee Integration and Settlement Pilot (CRISP)	12 months	5	*			*	*	*
Australia	Community Support Program (CSP)	12 months	None	[d]		*			
Canada	Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program (PSR)	12 months	5[e]	[f]	*	*		*	
Canada	Blended Visa Office-Referred Program (BVOR)	12 months	5	*	[g]		*	*	* *(partial 6 months)*
UK	UK Community Sponsorship Scheme	12 months[h]	5	*	*		*	*	*
Ireland	Community Sponsorship Ireland	18–24 months	5	*			*	*	*
USA	Welcome Corps	90 days[i]	5	*	*	*	*		
USA	Sponsor Circle Program (for Afghans)	90 days	5				*		
New Zealand	Community Refugee Sponsorship Program - Previously called the Community Organisation Refugee Sponsorship (CORS)	24 months	None	*		*	*		
Germany	NesT (Neustart im Team) Program	24 months	5	*			*	*	*
Argentina	Community Sponsorship Program (Programa Siria)	12 months	None		*	*		*	

[a] *Additionality refers to refugees supported through the community settlement program are over and above any national resettlement quota, thereby expanding the overall refugee intake.*

[b] *Linked/named refers to refugees/entrants are known or named by community supporters/sponsors.*

[c] *Unlinked/unknown refers to refugees/entrants and community supporters are unknown to each other and are 'matched' by a government or other agency.*

[d] *Prospective CSP primary applicants must meet Global Special Humanitarian visa eligibility, have employment prospects, English proficiency, and be aged 18–50.*

[e] *This is only relevant for Groups of Five (G5), there is no limits or guidelines for other sponsor types i.e., Sponsorship Agreement Holders (SAH), Constituent Groups (CGs) or Community Sponsors (CS), that sponsor refugees as an organisation, as opposed to G5s who are private citizens sponsoring refugees as such.*

[f] *Private community supporters are required to provide evidence of the refugee status of individuals they would like to sponsor, which may be through UNHCR or other recognised organisation.*

[g] *When the BVOR was introduced in 2013 the Government Assisted Refugees (GAR) target was reduced i.e., the target set for the BVOR came out of the number of GAR places rather than increasing the overall target (see Table 5 in the Evaluation of the Resettlement Programs (IRCC, 2016) and announcement published by the Canadian Council for Refugees (2013)).*

[h] *Community supporters provide accommodation for 24 months, and financial, practical, and social support for 12 months.*

[i] *The Welcome Corps also included an 'on-campus' variation, allowing US colleges and universities to sponsor refugee students for a full 12-month academic year. Note that Welcome Corps was terminated as of February 2025.*

3. Three settlement outcomes: comparing across Australia's settlement programs

Three core settlement outcomes were compared across Australia's settlement programs (CRISP, CSP, and matched HSP):

- social integration
- economic integration
- self-sufficiency

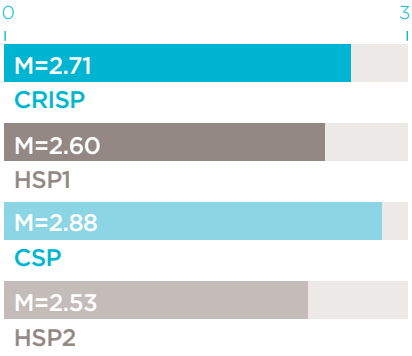
Box 3: To clearly differentiate between the 2 HSP comparison groups used in the evaluations, distinct labels are applied throughout the report. Results for HSP refugees who were matched to CRISP refugees are referred to as **HSP1**, while results for HSP entrants matched to CSP entrants are referred to as **HSP2**.

SUMMARY—Settlement outcomes

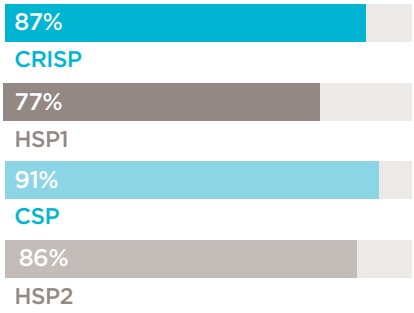
Refugees and entrants supported through the community settlement programs (CRISP and CSP) had comparable or greater social integration (sense of belonging), self-sufficiency, and economic integration compared to those supported through the government-assisted program HSP.

3.1 Social integration

A composite measure of **sense of belonging in the local community** was used to measure social integration.[1] Refugees/entrants in the community settlement programs had a stronger sense of belonging in their local community compared to refugees/entrants from the government settlement program (HSP) 10–12 months after arrival, but this difference was only significant between CSP and HSP2 entrants. Additionally, CSP refugees reported a significantly stronger sense of belonging than CRISP entrants.[2]



The majority of refugees and entrants reported that they 'agreed or strongly agreed' that they **felt part of their local community.**



The majority of **BNLA refugees** (see Section 1.6) reported that they 'always' or 'most of the time'[3] **felt part of the Australian community**.

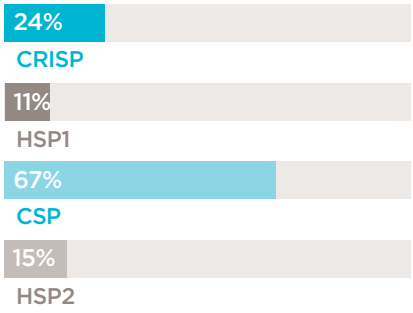
[1] Index of 5 survey questions that measure sense of belonging in the local community, for example, 'feeling welcome in the local community' and 'feeling part of the local community'. Measured on a scale of 1–3: 1='Disagree'; 2='Neither'; 3='Agree'. Note, an index of 8 survey items measuring sense of belonging in Australia more generally was presented in the respective *CRISP* and *CSP Evaluation Program Outcomes* reports, thus the Means are slightly different.

[2] 'M' refers to the Mean or average.

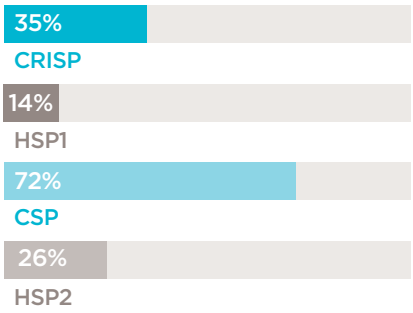
[3] The BNLA used a different scale 'always–never' versus the scale used in the CRISP and CSP surveys, 'agree–disagree'. In addition, the BNLA focuses on refugees' sense of belonging in Australia more generally, whereas the outcome in the CRISP and CSP evaluation focused on their sense of belonging in the local community.

3.2 Economic integration

'Worked for pay in the previous 4 weeks' was used as the primary measure of economic integration. Both CRISP refugees and CSP entrants were significantly more likely to have worked in a paid job in the previous 4 weeks 10–12 months after arrival, compared to HSP respectively. CSP entrants were also significantly more likely than CRISP refugees to have worked for pay during that period.

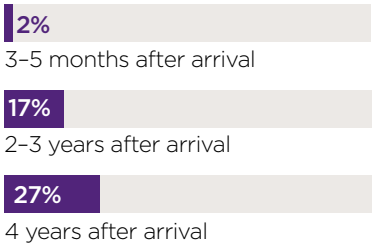


In addition, some refugees and entrants[1] were asked whether they **had worked for pay at any time since arriving in Australia.** Both CRISP refugees and CSP entrants were significantly more likely to have done any paid work since arriving in Australia, compared to HSP respectively. CSP entrants were also significantly more likely than CRISP refugees to have done any paid work since arriving in Australia.



[1] New questions were added to the respective CRISP and CSP surveys partway through T2 data collection to explore: whether they had done any work since arriving in Australia. As such, not all refugees or entrants were asked these new questions. Percentage who responded: CRISP 62%; HSP1 63%; CSP 70%; HSP2 70%.

Very few **BNLA refugees** were **employed** 3-5 months after arrival, however, the percentage of employed refugees increased over time.[2]

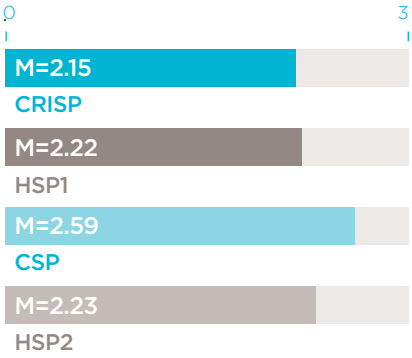


[2] BNLA refugees were asked whether they had done any paid work in a job, business, or farm in the last 7 days.

Although CRISP refugees and, to an even greater extent, CSP entrants were more likely to have worked compared to the HSP comparison group, many experienced occupational downgrading—not working in an occupation equivalent to their previous role or qualifications—or skills underutilisation—working in roles not commensurate with their skills and experience. While their social networks were instrumental in securing employment, most reported accepting positions in lower-skilled and/or low-paying jobs, that did not align with their aspirations or skills. This was particularly pronounced for CSP entrants, who, as reported in the *CSP Evaluation Program Outcomes report*, experienced subtle systemic discrimination, whereby their skills or experiences were (consciously or unconsciously) undervalued by prospective employers, resulting in wage suppression or unfavourable working conditions. These results mirror findings from the BLNA study (van Kooy et al., 2025) that found that men and, particularly, women refugees experienced an occupational downgrade even 10 years after arriving in Australia.

3.3 Self-sufficiency

A composite measure of **confidence to undertake a range of settlement activities independently,**[1] was used as a measure of self-sufficiency. On average, refugees and entrants had some confidence ('a little') to undertake these tasks 10–12 months after arrival, which had increased significantly over time[2] (see respective *CRISP* and *CSP Evaluation Program Outcomes* reports). CSP entrants reported significantly higher levels of confidence (self-sufficiency) than HSP2 entrants and CRISP refugees, respectively, 10–12 months after arrival. There were no significant differences between CRISP and HSP1 refugees.



[1] Index of 8 survey questions that measure confidence to do tasks independently, for example, 'Use public transport', 'Apply for jobs' or 'Apply for accommodation'. Measured on a scale of 1–3: 1='no confidence'; 2='a little confidence'; 3='a lot of confidence'. BNLA did not collect data on self-sufficiency.

[2] Confidence to undertake a range of settlement activities independently increased significantly over time for CRISP, HSP1, and CSP. However, there was no significant change for HSP2 entrants over time.

4. Factors influencing optimal settlement outcomes

This chapter explores factors that may influence optimal settlement outcomes. Six key factors were identified:

- social capital
- location
- English proficiency
- digital literacy
- psychological distress
- gender

The chapter draws on the descriptive analyses and qualitative findings presented in the respective *CRISP* and *CSP Evaluation Program Outcomes* reports, and additional bivariate statistical tests and multiple regression analyses[1] that were conducted to understand the relationships between key settlement outcomes and factors that may influence these. Further, panel regression models were used for the BNLA analyses to understand how some of the key outcome variables may change over time. **Table A1** in Appendix A provides a summary of the factors that influenced—i.e., were significantly associated with—the 3 key settlement outcomes.

[1] Multiple regressions were only undertaken if there was sufficient sample size. The number of control variables included in the models were limited by the sample size.

4.1 Social capital

SUMMARY—Social capital

Social capital was linked to improved settlement outcomes. CRISP refugees and CSP entrants who had linking social capital—strong connections with their community supporters—reported a greater sense of belonging in their local communities. CRISP refugees with bridging social capital—connections with people outside their ethnic or religious communities—were more confident to, for example, access services or apply for jobs (self-sufficiency), and were more likely to be employed at the end of the program. However, factors such as English proficiency and gender influenced the strength of these relationships.

Social relationships play an important role in refugee settlement by improving social integration (Patulny, 2015), access to employment (Kanas et al, 2012), and a sense of belonging (Schnell et al., 2015). Social relationships not only provide practical and emotional support, they also facilitate access to social networks, which provide additional resources and opportunities. The resources refugees access via these social networks is referred to as social capital (Bourdieu, 1986). Empirical evidence highlights the importance of facilitating access to social capital and rebuilding social networks to assist with resettlement and integration (Elliott & Yusuf, 2014; Pittaway et al., 2016; Ziersch et al., 2023). There are 3 forms of social capital: bonding, bridging, and linking (Pittaway et al., 2016). **Bonding social capital** refers to resources that come from individuals who share something in common with the refugee they are forming a connection with, like culture, religion, neighbourhood, and socioeconomic status. **Bridging social capital** refers to resources that come from individuals the refugee connects with in the wider community, outside of their immediate social group, with differing culture, religion, socioeconomic status etc. **Linking social capital** refers to the resources that come from individuals where there is a power differential. While bridging and linking social capital are sometimes considered the weaker of the ties, linking capital can be extremely valuable because it provides access to social networks of people in positions of authority, structures of power, status, and potential for 'getting ahead' that the refugee may not have been able to access through other connections (Pittaway et al., 2016). Social relationships and social capital can improve refugees' wellbeing, sense of belonging, social integration, and economic integration.

Emerging evidence shows that community sponsorship and private sponsorship models support refugees to develop broader and more diverse social networks than government-funded programs (D'Avino, 2024; Fratzke & Dorst, 2019). Through these models, community supporters provide companionship and support to the refugees that surpasses the limits of formalised government service provision, such as HSP (Fratzke & Dorst, 2019). These relationships improve refugees' emotional support, wellbeing, and confidence (D'Avino, 2024). There is early evidence to suggest that refugees with community sponsors have higher English language enrolment rates and higher rates of employment than those without sponsors (Crane Linn, 2022; Hynie et al., 2019). Although Kaida and colleagues (2020) note that in Canada, these positive gains diminish over time, with non-community sponsored refugees achieving similar employment rates and earnings as privately sponsored refugees.

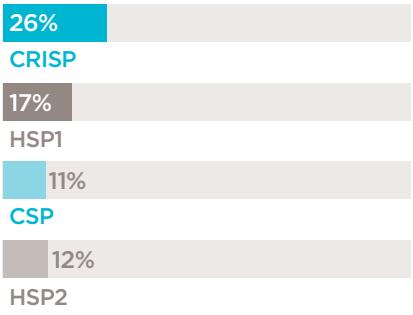
One of the key strengths of Australia's community settlement programs—CRISP and CSP—is the nature and quality of the relationships that developed between refugees/entrants and their community supporters. Unlike the HSP, where support is delivered by professional caseworkers through structured case management, the qualitative evaluation results highlight that community settlement programs foster more personal, informal, and enduring relationships. These relationships enabled a 'softer landing' offering immediate social connections, tailored emotional and practical support, and access to social networks.

The evaluation identified key distinctions in the structure and nature of these relationships across programs. In the community settlement programs, deep interpersonal relationships characterised by frequent socialising, genuine care, strength of connection, and a sense of long-term connection were observed. In CSP, this is perhaps unsurprising, as entrants and supporters have a pre-existing relationship, often as a relative or close acquaintance. Indeed, many CSP entrants reported they were related to their Australian Supporter, either directly or via marriage. In contrast, CSGs in CRISP are not known to the refugee household before arriving in Australia. Despite this, many CRISP refugees and CSG members described their relationship in friendship or kinship terms, often referring to one another as family.

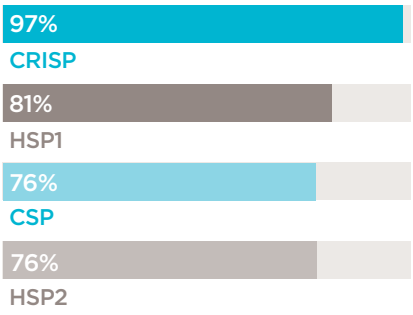
These experiences contrast markedly with HSP refugees/entrants, who described their relationship with HSP caseworkers as purely transactional and time-limited, focused primarily on formal and specific case management tasks.

CRISP refugees were significantly more likely to have built bridging social capital[1] compared to CSP entrants, and significantly more likely to have built linking social capital[2] compared to HSP1 refugees and CSP entrants respectively. However, CRISP refugees were significantly less likely to have developed bonding social capital[3] compared HSP1 refugees and CSP entrants respectively.

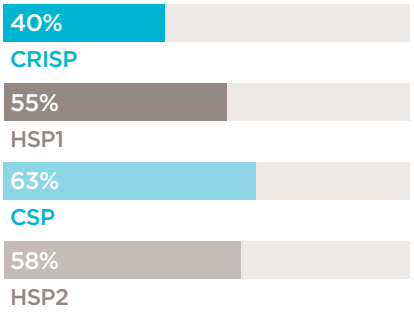
Bridging social capital 10–12 months after arrival



Linking social capital 10–12 months after arrival



Bonding social capital 10–2 months after arrival



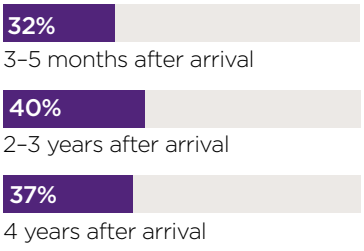
[1] **Bridging social capital** was defined as 'yes' if respondent reported they could ask for help in their day-to-day life from and/or attend leisure or sport activities with friends or people they know from outside their cultural or religious community who do not live with them. For CRISP refugees and CSP entrants, asking for help from their supporter was a separate response option and not included in the creation of this variable.

[2] **Linking social capital** for CRISP and CSP was defined as 'yes' if the respondent reported they could ask their supporter for help in day-to-day life and/or spent time socially with them within their household. For HSP, it was defined as 'yes' if the respondent reported they could ask their HSP caseworker for help in their day-to-day life.

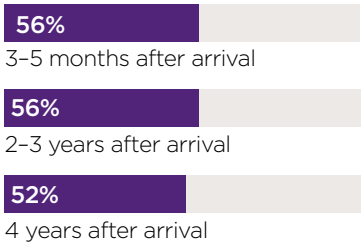
[3] **Bonding social capital** was defined as 'yes' if respondent reported they could ask for help in their day-to-day life from and/or attend leisure or sport activities with friends, family, or people they know from their cultural or religious community who do not live with them. For CSP entrants, asking for help or spending time socially with their Australian Supporter (who may be family or friends from their cultural or religious community) was a separate response option and not included in the creation of this variable.

The percentage of **BNLA refugees** who reported having **bridging social capital—**support from other community groups—increased from 3–5 months after arrival. The percentage who reported having **bonding social capital**—support from their ethnic and religious communities—remained relatively stable across the 3 timepoints. However, there was a small but significant decrease between 2–3 years and 4 years.

Bridging social capital

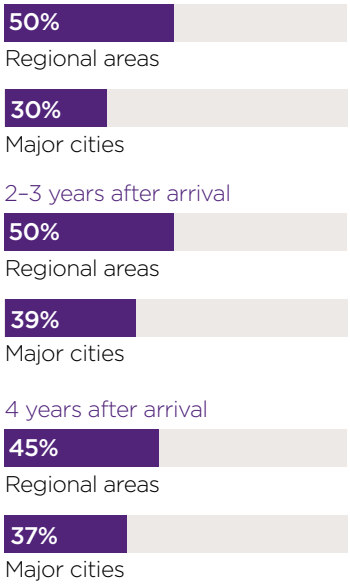


Bonding social capital



Men and women in the **BNLA** study reported similar levels of bonding social capital and bridging social capital. Levels of bonding social capital were largely similar among refugees living in regional areas and in major cities. However, refugees living in **regional areas** reported higher levels of **bridging social capital** than refugees in major cities and this trend remained constant over time.

Bridging social capital



To explore whether social capital supported refugees/entrants' settlement outcomes, bivariate statistical tests and multiple regressions were conducted to understand these relationships.

The analyses showed a relationship between linking social capital and **sense of belonging in the local community** (social integration) (Table A2). Specifically, CRISP refugees and CSP entrants who had linking social capital—i.e., continued to engage socially with their supporters, such as sharing a meal or going to a park, and/or felt that they could ask for help from their supporter—reported a significantly higher sense of belonging in their local community than those who did not have this linking social capital. The association between linking social capital and sense of belonging remained for CRISP refugees, even when taking into account gender, English proficiency, and mental health, indicating that these factors did not influence the relationship between linking social capital and social integration.

This was mirrored among HSP1 refugees—those who reported they could ask for help in their day-to-day life from their HSP caseworker, had a significantly higher sense of belonging in their local community compared to HSP1 refugees who did not have this linking social capital, even when gender, English proficiency, and mental health were accounted for.

While linking social capital was associated with social integration, the results suggest that neither bridging nor bonding social capital were significantly associated with refugees' sense of belonging. This could be attributed to expectations—while one could reasonably expect to spend time with family or people you know, being included socially and feeling supported by strangers could make one feel welcome and included in the broader community.

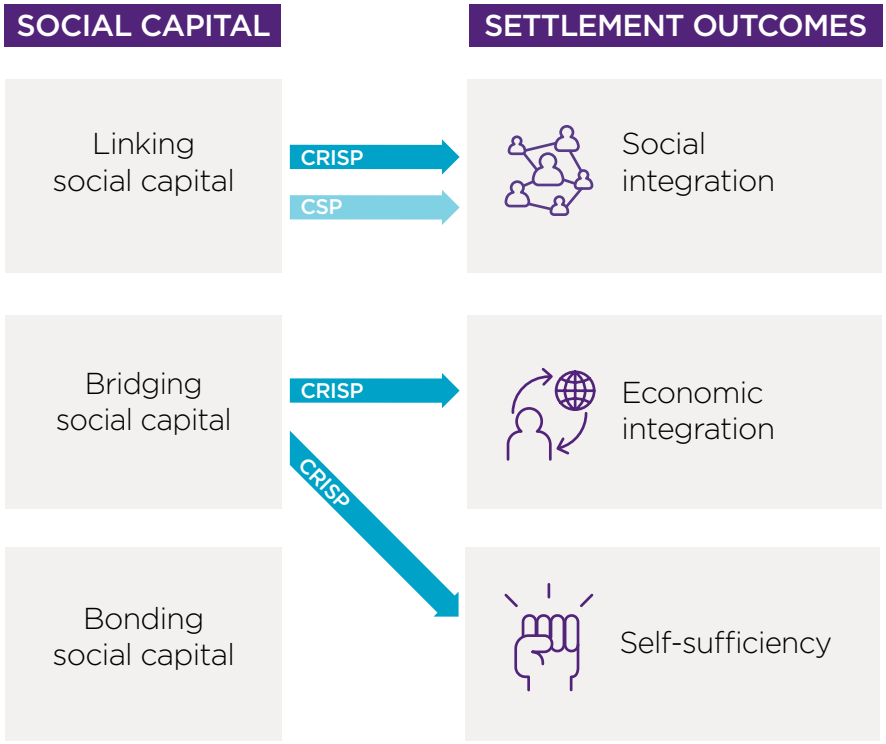
Social capital was also shown to be associated with **self-sufficiency** (Table A2). The findings showed that CRISP refugees who spent time socially and/or could ask for help (e.g., babysitting, taking them to an appointment) from people **outside their cultural or religious community** (bridging social capital) were significantly more confident to, for example, access services and apply for a job (self-sufficiency) at the end of the program compared to CRISP refugees who did not have bridging social capital. However, when the association between English proficiency and self-sufficiency was accounted for, bridging social capital was no longer significant, suggesting that, although bridging social capital is associated with self-sufficiency, English proficiency can impact the effect of this relationship.

Both bonding (e.g., spending time socially and/or asking for help from people **within their cultural or religious community**) and bridging social capital increased HSP1 refugees' self-sufficiency. However, when taking English proficiency and gender into account, only bonding social capital was significantly associated with self-sufficiency.

Lastly, social capital was also associated with **employment** (i.e., having a paid job in the previous 4 weeks) (Table A3). CRISP refugees who had bridging social capital were more likely to have a paid job at the end of the program compared with those who did not have bridging social capital. This association remained even when accounting for age, gender, English proficiency, and location. This finding was supported by the qualitative data, where CRISP refugees described drawing on their CSGs and their CSGs' social networks to find employment.

Figure 2 summarises the types of social capital that influenced (i.e., were significantly associated with) the 3 core settlement outcomes for CRISP and CSP. It visualises that CRISP refugees and CSP entrants who had developed linking social capital (97%; 76%) were significantly more likely to have positive social integration—i.e., sense of belonging—compared to those without linking social capital. Furthermore, CRISP refugees who had built bridging social capital (26%) were significantly more likely to have been employed—economic integration—and/or be more self-sufficient, compared to those without bridging social capital. Bonding social capital did not significantly influence the settlement outcomes for CRISP nor CSP. (See Tables A2 and A3).

Figure 2. *Summary of the type of social capital that significantly influenced the likelihood of attaining the respective core settlement outcomes for CRISP and CSP*



Bonding social capital did not significantly influence the settlement outcomes for CRISP nor CSP.

While there was no strong association between bonding social capital—connections with people from their ethnic or religious communities—and the 3 settlement outcomes, these findings do not negate the importance of bonding social capital to refugees and entrants (see Chapter 7.4). Similarly, while there was no strong association between linking social capital and employment, many CRISP refugees and CSP entrants who were employed received support from their CSG and Australian Supporter, respectively, to gain this employment (see respective *CRISP* and *CSP Evaluation Program Outcomes* reports). Lastly, both CRISP refugees and CSP entrants were more likely to **find it easy to make friends with people in their local community with different backgrounds from them** (bridging social capital) compared to HSP refugees/entrants. This indicates that they were likely able to draw on the community supporters' networks to develop these relationships.

Overall, the evidence showed that compared to HSP, CRISP refugees and CSP entrants reported more social networks and more socialising opportunities, especially at the beginning of the CRISP program. However, the relative advantage of CRISP for refugees' social integration seemed to reduce slightly over time. This could be partly explained by the reduced need for support and naturally dwindling strength of some supporter-refugee relationships as reported in the qualitative interviews with CRISP refugees and focus groups with CSGs. Despite this, many CSGs, Australian Supporters, CRISP refugees, and CSP entrants described their intentions to maintain their relationships long-term, beyond the life of the official program.

4.2 Location

SUMMARY—Location

CRISP refugees settled in regional locations had higher employment rates than refugees living in urban locations. However, the jobs secured in both regional and urban locations did not always align with refugees' prior skills or aspirations. Nevertheless, these roles may offer valuable Australian work experience, which was reportedly a barrier to obtaining employment for many refugees.

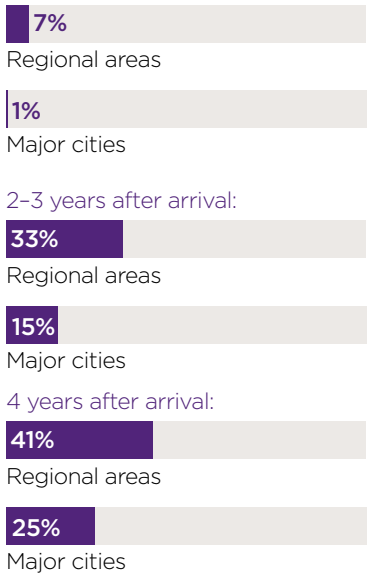
The resettlement location can impact refugee outcomes by influencing access to employment opportunities, settlement services, and others who share the same language, culture, and religious background (Fozdar & Hartley, 2013).

Location[1] was not associated with CRISP refugees' social integration nor self-sufficiency (Table A4). However, there was a statistically significant relationship between location and **employment** (Table A5). CRISP refugees living in a regional location were significantly more likely to have worked for pay (in the previous 4 weeks) 10–12 months after arrival compared to CRISP refugees living in major cities. The association between location and employment remained even when accounting for gender, English proficiency, and children in the household.

However, while CRISP refugees may have been gaining Australian work experience, many were employed in precarious employment (e.g., casual or temporary employment). Furthermore, the types of occupations CRISP refugees were employed in (reported in free text in the survey), were predominantly lower-skilled or entry-level jobs and included, for example, food service workers (chef assistant, pizza maker, kitchen support), cleaners, labourers and drivers. The types of employment for HSP refugees were similar, for example, cleaners, hospitality workers, bakers, cabinet makers, and labourers. There were no differences in types of occupation by location.

The qualitative data suggest that higher employment rates in regional locations were not necessarily influenced by the matching process, i.e., employment potential was not a primary consideration for most CSGs in regional areas when selecting households to support. Although a small number of CSGs actively sought refugees with specific skills needed or available in their communities (such as a chef), most focused on broader indicators of suitability for regional living. Given some of the potential challenges associated with regional settings, including limited access to services, long travel distances, and reduced public transport options, CSGs seemed to prioritise factors such as English proficiency, health status, and overall independence when assessing whether a household would be well placed to settle well in a regional context. Despite higher employment rates, many refugees in regional areas reported limited job opportunities, with available roles concentrated primarily in the service sector—roles that were not always commensurate with their skills or aspirations (skills underutilisation). As discussed in Section 3.2, this was not unique to regional locations.

Results from the **BNLA** analyses mirrored the evaluation findings, where BNLA refugees living in regional areas were more likely to be **employed** than those in major cities.



[1] No analyses by location were conducted for CSP and HSP2 entrants as the number of entrants in regional locations was too small.

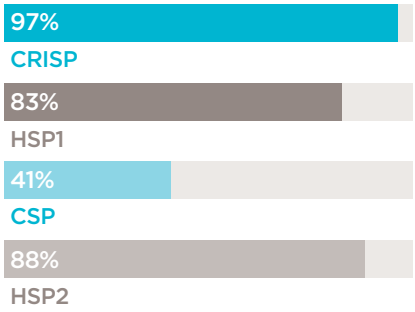
4.3 English proficiency

SUMMARY—English proficiency

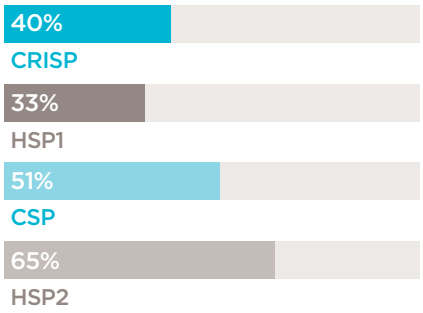
English proficiency was positively associated with self-sufficiency and gaining paid employment, signalling the importance of English as a mechanism for achieving optimal settlement outcomes.

English proficiency is an important predictor of positive settlement. Data from BNLA found that oral English proficiency was the single strongest predictor of self-sufficiency—such as finding a job and accessing emergency help—accounting for 21% of the variance even after taking into account other variables such as age and education (Blake et al., 2019). Another study of Syrian refugees in Scotland found that English proficiency was associated with positive wellbeing and community engagement (Martzoukou & Burnett, 2018).

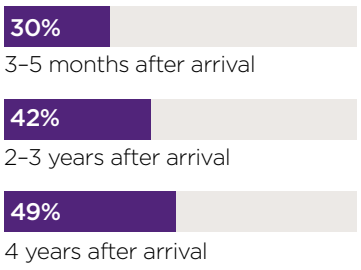
Except for CSP, the majority of the refugees/entrants across the programs had **studied English** since arriving in Australia:



By the end of the program, two-fifths to one-half of the CRISP refugees and CSP entrants reported a **high overall English proficiency** (ability to understand, speak, read and write 'well' or 'very well'). The percentage of CRISP and HSP1 refugees' who reported overall high English proficiency increased over the evaluation period. Whereas the percentage of CSP and HSP2 entrants' who perceived their English proficiency as high, decreased over time (see respective *CRISP* and *CSP Evaluation Program Outcomes* reports).



BNLA refugees improved their English language skills over time. The percentage of refugees with **high overall English proficiency** (ability to understand, speak, read and write 'well' or 'very well') increased at each timepoint, with a significant increase between 3–5 months and 4 years after arrival.



English proficiency played an important role in facilitating refugees' and entrants' settlement outcomes. While there was no association between English proficiency and social integration (Table A6), refugees who had high English proficiency (ability to understand, speak, read and write 'well' or 'very well') were significantly more **self-sufficient** across all programs, compared to those with lower English proficiency ('not well' or 'none') (Table A6). This association remained significant for CRISP and HSP1 refugees, even when taking into account gender and children in the household.[1]

Similarly, CRISP refugees who had high English proficiency were significantly more likely to have **worked for pay the previous 4 weeks** 10–12 months after arrival compared to CRISP refugees with lower English proficiency (Table A7) and remained significant even when gender and location were accounted for.

It stands to reason that effective or strong communication skills would facilitate access to services and work in Australia. Accordingly, the results underscore English proficiency as an important mechanism for achieving optimal settlement outcomes.

While English proficiency improved over time, projections from the BNLA study suggest that only about one-half of refugees are likely to reach high English proficiency after 4 years in Australia. While the availability of free AMEP is invaluable, there are still opportunities to improve access to these services. For example, ensuring classes are accessible for those who are working (especially for CSP entrants who prioritised immediate work over English classes), those living in areas with limited transportation, and those with caring responsibilities.

[1] Multiple regressions could not be conducted for CSP or HSP2 due to low numbers (n < 50), thus not meeting key assumptions for reliable modelling—particularly the requirement for a sufficient number of outcome events per variable.

4.4 Digital literacy

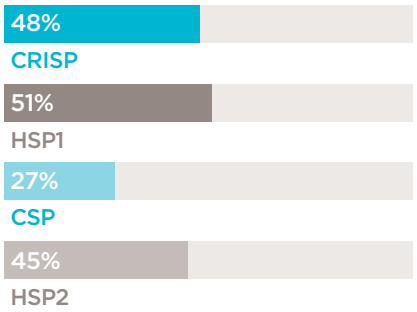
SUMMARY—Digital literacy

A substantial minority of refugees and entrants had no confidence to undertake technology-related tasks—a key indicator of digital literacy. Digital literacy was significantly higher among CSP entrants compared to CRISP refugees and was positively associated with greater self-sufficiency and employment, underscoring its role in enabling refugees and entrants to independently access essential services (e.g., Medicare, Centrelink) and navigate job-seeking processes.

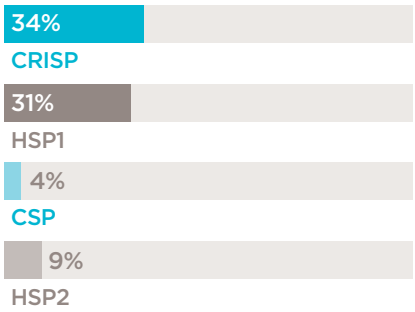
Digital literacy is an essential skill for refugees to acquire to enable them to navigate digital platforms needed to access basic services (e.g., Medicare, Centrelink) and to seek and apply for job opportunities. Enhancing digital literacy among refugees can lead to reduced isolation and improved settlement outcomes (Alam & Imran, 2015; Potocky, 2022; Shariati et al., 2017).

A substantial minority of refugees and entrants, particularly among CRISP and HSP1, reported **'no confidence'** to undertake the following **technology-related tasks independently:**

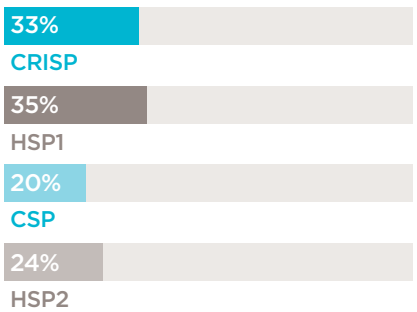
use technology for education or employment (e.g., apply for a job, use computer at work, study online)



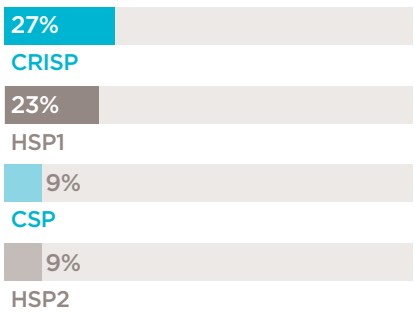
be safe online (e.g., not saving or sharing username and passwords)



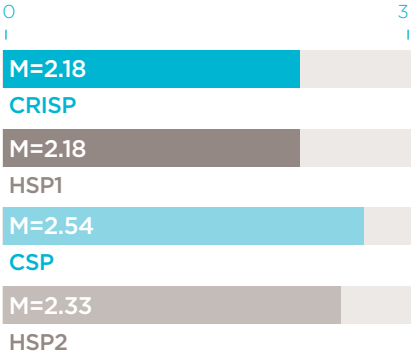
use the internet to access essential services (e.g., banking, Medicare)



use a digital device such as smartphone or computer.



A composite measure of refugees' confidence to undertake technology-related tasks independently was used to measure **digital literacy.**[1] Overall, CSP refugees had significantly more digital literacy compared to CRISP refugees, but there were no significant differences between the community settlement programs and their respective HSP comparison groups.



The results indicate a positive association between **self-sufficiency** and digital literacy across all settlement programs, with higher digital literacy associated with higher self-sufficiency (Table A8). This association remained significant for CRISP and HSP1, even when taking into account age, gender, and English proficiency.

CRISP and HSP1 refugees who had higher digital literacy were significantly more likely to have **worked for pay in the previous 4 weeks** 10–12 months after arrival, than those with lower digital literacy (Table A9). However, this association was no longer significant after accounting for gender and English proficiency. This finding suggests that although a higher digital literacy is associated with having a paid job, English proficiency and gender can impact the effect of this relationship.

[1] Index of 4 survey questions that measure confidence to do digital literacy tasks independently, for example, 'Use the internet to access essential services (e.g., banking, Medicare, Centrelink)' or 'Use technology for education or employment (e.g., apply for a job, use a computer at work, study online)'. Measured on a scale of 1–3: 1='no confidence'; 2='a little confidence'; 3='a lot of confidence'.

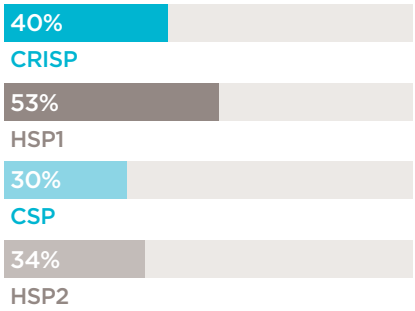
4.5 Psychological distress

SUMMARY— Psychological distress

Lower psychological distress was significantly associated with sense of belonging in the local community. This association remained after taking into account age, English proficiency, children in the family, and gender. However, despite needing mental health support, some refugees/entrants were choosing not to engage with mental health services, signalling a need to address cultural stigma and build trust.

Many refugees experience psychological distress associated with pre-migration trauma exposure and the stress associated with resettlement (Correa-Velez et al., 2010; Strijk et al., 2011). A strong sense of belonging can be a protective factor for both mental wellbeing and physical health (Chadwick & Collins, 2015; Kitchen et al., 2015).

Compared to CSP and HSP2 entrants, a higher percentage of CRISP and HSP1 refugees were considered to have **moderate or high psychological distress,** signalling the need for mental health support.



The qualitative data indicated that, while most refugees across the settlement programs had accessed the emotional support they needed, some remained hesitant to engage with psychological services despite their availability. CSG members also expressed feeling unprepared to address the trauma experienced by many families. This aligns with existing research showing that refugees often have low rates of mental health service utilisation. Barriers to help-seeking include cultural stigma surrounding mental health, limited mental health literacy, distrust of services, and visa-related insecurity (Byrow et al., 2020).

To examine the relationship between psychological distress and the 3 settlement outcomes, bivariate statistical tests and multiple regressions were conducted for CRISP and HSP1 refugees.[1] The findings showed that CRISP and HSP1 refugees who reported lower levels of psychological distress were significantly more likely to report a strong **sense of belonging** in their local community (Table A10). This association remained significant after taking into account age, English proficiency, children in the household, and gender. The findings suggest that a sense of belonging may mitigate psychological distress and serve as a protective factor by enhancing access to social support. It may also be the case that lower levels of psychological distress make it easier for refugees to connect with others in their community. No significant relationship was found between psychological distress and self-sufficiency (Table A10) nor economic integration (Table A11).

[1] Multiple regression analyses were not conducted for CSP and HSP2 due to the small sample size (n < 50), which did not meet key assumptions for reliable modelling—particularly the requirement for a sufficient number of outcome events per variable.

4.6 Gender

SUMMARY—Gender

Males from the CSP and HSP programs were more likely to have a paid job 10–12 months after arrival compared to females. There were no gender differences in terms of the 3 settlement outcomes for CRISP.

Studies have shown a range of gender differences in settlement outcomes—including access to paid work and social networks—that persist and, in some cases, become more pronounced over time (Cheung & Phillimore, 2017; Kosyakova et al., 2023). Notably, female refugees and entrants are frequently found to have poorer outcomes or take longer to achieve positive settlement outcomes. A German longitudinal study found that male refugees were more likely than female refugees to be in paid employment within five years of arrival. This gender gap, which was present from the start and persisted over time, was driven by factors like limited childcare, traditional gender roles, differences in pre-migration work experience and lower language proficiency among others (Kosyakova et al., 2023).

The findings indicated that gender was not associated with self-sufficiency for those in the community settlement programs (CRISP and CSP). However, males in both HSP1 and HSP2 (i.e., those matched to CRISP and CSP) had significantly higher **self-sufficiency** compared to females (Table A12). This relationship was, however, no longer statistically significant for HSP1 refugees after taking into account English proficiency and children in the household.

Males from the CSP and HSP programs were more likely to have **worked for pay in the previous 4 weeks** 10–12 months after arrival compared to females (Table A13). This is perhaps unsurprising for CSP, as the majority of primary applicants were male. This association remained for CSP and HSP1 after taking into account English proficiency, children in the household,[1] and age respectively. However, there was no association between gender and employment among CRISP refugees.

[1] In addition, CSP entrants without children under 6 years of age in the household, were significantly more likely to have worked (74%) compared to those with children under 6 (46%).

5. Key community supporter outcomes—CRISP

Four key outcomes, and the factors that may influence these, were explored for CSGs:

- social connections
- knowledge and awareness of the settlement landscape and experiences of refugees
- understanding and valuing refugees' contributions and culture
- fulfilment from participating in CRISP

Community settlement programs are grounded on the premise that community involvement not only enhances the settlement experience and outcomes for refugees but also generates meaningful benefits for those who support them. For community supporters, the act of welcoming and assisting newly arrived refugees offers opportunities to build social connections, deepen cultural understanding, increase awareness of the settlement landscape, and foster a sense of purpose and civic contribution. In addition, these efforts could influence broader communities to create a welcoming, tolerant, and inclusive settlement environment (Bond, 2021; Morris et al., 2021; Soehl & Van Haren, 2023). This chapter explores the outcomes experienced by community supporters in CRISP, along with the circumstances that helped shape these.

5.1 Social connections

SUMMARY— Social connections

CSG members increased their social connections by making friends within their CSG, with the refugee household, and in the broader community. Stronger social connections were associated with positive group cohesion, greater time spent supporting refugee households, and being located in regional areas.

Extensive literature has documented the importance of refugees' social connections and networks for several outcomes related to emotional support, sense of belonging, satisfaction, mental health, and identity (Bulled, 2025; Song et al., 2024; Ziersch et al., 2023). Refugees' friendships with sponsors are positively associated with employment and lowering the risk of isolation (Dauphin et al., 2024; Soehl & Van Haren, 2023). Yet, there has been less focus on the positive impact of social connections for community supporters. Given the benefit of social connections for all individuals, new friendships developed in the refugee settlement process will likely have flow-on effects for community supporters as well.

Many CSG members experienced **new social connections** through their involvement in CRISP, having made new friends:

within their CSG

with the refugee household

in the community (through the activities they had undertaken to support the refugee household).

To explore CSG members' social connections further, a composite measure of the friendships CSGs made was used.[1] CSG members who felt positive about their groups' cohesion[2] and those who spent more hours supporting the refugee household, were significantly more likely to report stronger social connections (Table A14). CSG members in regional locations and men also reported higher social connections compared to those in major cities and women, respectively. There were no meaningful differences based on age or employment status.

For many CSG members, the social connections that they had developed persisted even after their participation in CRISP had ended, suggesting potential longevity and durability of these social connections. Although CSGs generally described positive experiences in developing a variety of social connections by participating in CRISP, some CSGs noted that their friendships with refugee households lacked the depth and reciprocity that they had initially expected (see Chapter 6.3).

[1] An Index of 5 survey questions that measure the friendships CSGs made including: within their CSG, with the refugee household, in the community, with members of other CSGs, and their children/grandchildren had made friends with children from the refugee household. This was a multiple-choice question on a scale of 1 'Yes'; 0 'No'

[2] Group cohesion/dynamics was an index of 4 questions on a scale of 1–5. 1='Strongly disagree' to 5='Strongly agree'. Questions including e.g., 'I enjoy working with the members of our group', 'All members of our group get along'.

5.2 Knowledge and awareness of the settlement landscape and refugees' experiences

SUMMARY—Knowledge

CSG members increased their understanding of the settlement landscape and the experiences and needs of refugees through participating in CRISP. Those who found providing support to the household challenging were more likely to increase this understanding, suggesting that grappling with complex situations may deepen awareness.

Individuals who support refugee integration are often motivated by humanitarian concerns, a desire for social justice, or empathy (Doidge et al., 2018; Kende et al., 2017; Landmann et al., 2023; Meijeren et al., 2023). While some community supporters and volunteers may have previous experience supporting refugees, some may be completely new and have little to no familiarity with the settlement landscape (Ferris et al., 2024; Landmann et al., 2023). Examining community supporters' awareness and knowledge is crucial given the role that they play in providing support to the refugee household and in creating an inclusive settlement environment.

The majority of CSGs increased their **understanding of the settlement landscape** ('a little' or 'a lot') including:

the settlement/migrant services available in the region

93%

the local networks they can access to provide additional support to refugees (e.g., voluntary services, free/low-cost events)

94%

the cultural/religious groups available in their local community.

73%

A composite measure of CSGs' knowledge of the opportunities and services available to refugees was used to explore CSGs' understanding of the settlement landscape further.[1]

There was no association between CSG members' prior experience—that is, participation in CRSA's Group Mentorship Program—and whether their understanding of the settlement landscape increased through CRISP suggesting that CRISP offered a learning experience that enhanced knowledge even among those with previous exposure (Table A15). However, those who found the support role more challenging were significantly more likely to report increased understanding, suggesting that grappling with complex or unexpected situations may deepen awareness of the broader settlement system (Table A15). No differences were observed by age, gender, employment status, or hours of support.

In addition, participating in CRISP increased ('a little' or 'a lot') CSG members' **understanding of refugees' experiences and awareness of refugees' needs** including the:

basic needs of refugees settling in Australia

95%

specific needs of refugees, based on their background

95%

experience of refugees who come to Australia

95%

challenges faced by refugees with a low level of English proficiency.

93%

Using a composite measure of understanding refugees' experiences and needs[2] indicated that CSG members who were employed, experienced greater group cohesion, and who felt their group avoided providing conflicting information to the refugee household were significantly more likely to have increased their understanding of refugees' experiences and needs (Table A16). In addition, similar to the findings above, those who found supporting the refugee household challenging, were significantly more likely to have increased their understanding of refugees' experience and needs.

In the focus groups, CSGs described how their involvement in CRISP made them aware of major gaps in access to settlement support. CSGs explained that, while there is a perception that settlement support reached all refugees, many refugees missed out on settlement support services that were not geographically dispersed. For example, refugee health programs offering extensive support are often concentrated in specific regions within a state, making access to these services logistically difficult for refugee households living outside these regions. Other examples included limited access in some locations to specialist schools with language hubs for new arrivals and medical specialists for refugees with chronic conditions.

1 Index of 5 survey questions measuring CSGs' understanding of the settlement landscape such as 'settlement/migrant services available in my region' and ' Cultural/religious groups available in my local community'. On a scale of 1–3. 1='Not at all' to 3='A lot'

2 An index of 7 survey questions was used to measure CSGs' understanding of refugees' experiences and needs. On a scale of 1–3. 1='Not at all' to 3='A lot'

5.3 Understanding and valuing refugees' contributions and culture

SUMMARY—Valuing refugees' contributions

Through their participation in CRISP, CSGs deepened their understanding of the positive contributions refugees make to Australian society, though language barriers limited this learning for some. The program also fostered social cohesion with many CSGs feeling they positively influenced broader community attitudes toward refugees—especially those who built new social connections through their support activities.

Positive perceptions of refugees and recognition of their cultural contributions are increasingly acknowledged as essential components of cohesive and inclusive communities. International research suggests that when host community members perceive refugees as positively contributing to society—economically, socially, or culturally—they are more likely to engage in supportive behaviours and develop closer social relationships with them (Korol & Bevelander, 2023). This subchapter explores how participation in the CRISP program has contributed to increased awareness and valuing of refugee contributions among community supporters, a critical outcome for building welcoming and resilient settlement environments.

Over three-quarters of CSG members increased their **understanding the positive contributions of refugees** ('a little' or 'a lot') through participating in CRISP including:

the positive contribution refugees can make to a local community

85%

the types of skills refugees bring to Australia

83%

the role of multiculturalism on Australian society

78%

the impact of immigration on Australian society.

77%

A composite measure[1] was used to explore CSGs' understanding of the positive contributions to Australian society. The results indicated that there was no association between CSGs' understanding and their demographic characteristics (e.g., age, gender, employment status, location), nor the hours of support provided (Table A17). However, CSG members who felt they were unable to support the refugee household at times as a result of language barriers, were significantly less likely to report an increased understanding. This suggests that meaningful cultural exchange and learning may be contingent on effective communication, and that language barriers can inhibit the development of mutual understanding.

In addition, by participating in CRISP, CSGs deepened their **cultural knowledge** and, to a lesser extent, their appreciation, reflected by the percentage who 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that participating in CRISP had:

improved their cultural knowledge

81%

increased how much they value the refugee households' culture.

61%

While the percentage of CSGs who increased how much they value refugees' culture was less pronounced, this may reflect the fact that many CSG members already held strong positive views of refugees' cultures prior to participating, leaving less room for change.

CSGs also felt that their participation in CRISP extended to the broader community with almost two-thirds feeling that **their group had a positive influence on the way others in their community treat refugees.**

61%

Importantly, those CSG members who had made friends in the community through the activities they had undertaken to support the refugee household were significantly more likely to report that they had a positive influence on the way others in their community treat refugees, highlighting that supporting the refugee household not only fostered social connections but also served as a conduit for shifting community attitudes and promoting a more inclusive environment (Table A18).

CSGs similarly described in the focus groups that their involvement in CRISP exposed the broader community to new cultures, breaking down cultural barriers, debunking stereotypes about refugees, and educating the community about the hardships they experienced before arriving in Australia. CSGs described exposure to new cultures (e.g., multiculturalism) as mutually beneficial. CSGs and the community interacted with refugee households, and refugee households had opportunities to develop networks, such as eating dinner or visiting with people born in Australia. Other examples of positive changes in local communities as a result of CRISP, included the designation of their city as a 'Refugee Welcome Zone' and the incorporation of ethnic foods on the menu of a local restaurant.

[1] Index of 4 survey questions measuring CSGs' understanding of the refugees' positive contributions, including 'The impact of immigration on Australian society', 'The role of multiculturalism on Australian society, 'The positive contribution refugees can make to a local community' and 'The types of skills refugees bring to Australia'. On a scale of 1–3. 1='Not at all' to 3='A lot'

5.4 Fulfilment from participating in CRISP

SUMMARY—Fulfilment

CSG members generally expressed fulfilment as a result of participating in the CRISP program. The strongest predictors of CSG fulfilment were positive group dynamics, clarity of roles, and the ability to effectively communicate with and respond to the refugee household's needs.

Volunteer work can provide benefits such as self-fulfilment, community connections, overall life satisfaction, and quality of life (Cattan et al., 2011; Milbourne et al., 2018). Volunteers who feel satisfied and fulfilled are more likely to invest more time in their work (Davis et al., 2003; Finklestein, 2008; Jaime et al., 2022) and are more likely to speak positively about their experiences and recruit new volunteers, which is crucial for the sustainability of the CRISP program (Kim et al., 2019; Prince et al., 2022).

The majority of CSG members **felt fulfilled** as a result of providing support to the refugee household, with most 'agreeing' or 'strongly agreeing' that the experience had:

been rewarding

91%

provided a sense of purpose

87%

provided a sense of achievement

86%

been enjoyable.

77%

To explore CSGs' fulfilment further, a composite measure of CSGs experiences of providing support to the refugee household was used.[1] CSG members who reported strong group cohesion—where roles were clear and dynamics were positive—and who had built social connections through participating in CRISP—such as making friends within their CSG, with the refugee house, or the community—were significantly more likely to find the experience fulfilling (Table A19). Furthermore, CSG members who felt that their group had the skills and experience to support the refugee household were significantly more likely to find the experience fulfilling.

In contrast, fulfilment was significantly lower for CSGs who found the experience emotionally draining, who lacked clarity about the needs of the refugee household, provided conflicting advice to the refugee household, and for whom language barriers prevented their ability to provide support to the household (Table A19). Language barriers could limit the ability to build relationships with refugee households. Additionally, conflicting opinions between CSG members and with the family could also strain interpersonal relationships and thus, lower CSG fulfilment.

Fulfilment did not vary by location, age, hours of support, or whether members reported experiencing challenges due to a lack of skills or knowledge to support the refugee household within their group. Interestingly, CSG fulfilment also did not differ for members who had challenging experiences versus those who did not (Table A19). This suggests that a challenging support experience does not necessarily lower a CSG's fulfilment; rather, fulfilment is shaped more by the quality of group dynamics, the formation of social connections, feeling equipped to provide support, and the ability to effectively communicate and respond to household needs.

[1] Index of 4 survey questions measuring CSGs' level of fulfilment, such as 'It has been rewarding' and 'Provided a sense of achievement'. Measured on a scale of 1–5. 1= 'Strongly disagree' to 5='Strongly agree'.

6. Key features of community settlement programs that influence the experiences of refugees/entrants and community supporters

This chapter examines key design features that shape Australia's community settlement programs and how these operate in practice and influence the experiences of both community supporters and refugees/entrants.

The features explored include matching CSGs and potential CRISP refugees, the relational foundations of support, program eligibility, drawing on volunteer non-specialist community supporters, and utilising regional locations. The analysis of these program features offers a deeper understanding of how community-led settlement unfolds in practice, shedding light on its impacts for both refugees and community supporters, and pointing to opportunities for refinement.

6.1 Matching process—CRISP

SUMMARY—Matching process

The matching process was refined in the initial stage of the pilot to improve the information shared and better align CSG and refugee households' preferences and capacities. CSGs expressed a diverse range of considerations that would shape their decision-making, yet the process may still favour their preferences over those of refugees. Leveraging existing data, gaining a better understanding of unmatched cases, and diversifying referrals may enhance the matching process further.

The CRISP program supports refugees who have no known family links in Australia. As such, refugees are matched with CSGs prior to arrival. This matching process was facilitated by CRSA, following referrals from the Department of Home Affairs who identified UNHCR-referred refugees who may be eligible for CRISP. The processes evolved over the course of the pilot as CRSA and the Department gained insights into what worked well and where challenges emerged, informed by implementation experience and early evaluation findings.

In the early stages of the CRISP implementation, it became evident that the matching process required further consideration to ensure placements aligned refugees' backgrounds (such as their skills, ethnicity, religion), lifestyle, and preferences, with the capacities of the potential area and community. This was particularly evident for refugees who were matched with CSGs located in regional areas, where some refugee households experienced social isolation due to the absence of cultural or religious communities, including limited access to places of worship, culturally familiar food and services, and people who spoke the same language or shared similar backgrounds. Initially, the level and type of information provided to refugees and CSGs may have contributed to refugees being matched to CSGs who were located in areas that did not align with their preferences or needs. This led to some families deciding to relocate to major cities, thus exiting the CRISP program and moving to the HSP. These outcomes were disappointing for the CSGs involved, who had invested considerable time and effort and were motivated to make a meaningful contribution, highlighting the need for a more nuanced and informed approach to matching.

In response, CRSA refined and adapted the matching process to improve alignment by ensuring both refugees and CSGs received sufficient information to make more informed decisions. This included CSGs receiving more detailed profiles about the refugee household, and prospective CRISP refugees initially receiving an introductory video developed by CRSA that outlined the CRISP program, including what to expect from settling in regional areas and inviting them to be receptive to the opportunities of regional settlement. Refugee households

also received community-specific information prepared by the CSG once a match was identified. These changes were intended to better prepare prospective CRISP refugee households and foster shared ownership of the match. Furthermore, with more detailed information about the proposed refugee households, CSGs could identify factors that might support a successful placement, such as industry connections or local workforce needs aligned with the refugee's background. However, as some of the refinements were introduced later in the pilot, their effectiveness could not be fully tested within the evaluation period and would benefit from further monitoring.

Reflecting on their experiences and considering future sponsorships, CSGs identified a range of preferences and considerations that would influence their decision-making during the matching process in the focus groups. For some this was to capitalise on their skills and personal experiences or circumstances, for example supporting a household who spoke a certain language because one of the CSG members spoke that language, or a household with a person living with a disability due to a CSG member's prior work in the disability sector. Preferences were also shaped by practical considerations, such as capacity and resources. For example, supporting a smaller family size would be easier to transport in one car, or a larger family with higher Centrelink income who could then access a bigger home which were more readily available. While some CSGs expressed a general willingness to support any household, others noted that, in hindsight, they would be more selective in the future, based on what they had learned about their own capacities and community context. This range of preferences may support the case for broadening the diversity of refugee households identified for referral to CRISP, including that some potential CSGs had expressed interest in supporting refugees with varied backgrounds or circumstances, yet the refugee families referred to the program appeared to share similar characteristics. These insights also point to the potential value of providing clear guidance to new CSGs about what factors to consider during the matching process.

While the revised processes aimed to improve alignment between refugee households and CSGs, the effort spent in the matching process may still privilege CSG preferences, which may be more readily expressed and accommodated than those of the refugee households. This imbalance reflects several complex factors, including the desire to avoid a protracted process that could delay refugees' arrival in Australia, the program's reliance on CSGs as a volunteer workforce, and the challenges of gaining information and communicating with refugees while abroad. Although CRSA engaged with refugee households to understand their background and experiences, the context of displacement may limit refugees' ability to articulate their preferences fully, including that refugees may feel compelled to accept any opportunity for resettlement, even if it does not align with their long-term goals, such as employment or education (Jones & Teytelboym, 2017). While CRSA recorded instances where refugee households decline matches or were referred to HSP—either pre-arrival or due to being unmatched—there is limited contextual information about who these households are, why matches are declined, and what the implications may be. This lack of detail restricts understanding of whether certain profiles of refugees are consistently not being matched, what additional factors might be relevant to consider in the matching process, or whether some households may be disadvantaged by current practices. Some anecdotal evidence indicated that refugees' preferences may be more nuanced than currently captured. For example, a refugee who identified as LGBTQAI+ reportedly preferred not to be matched with a CSG from that community (e.g., an affinity group), expressing a desire for their resettlement experience not to be defined solely by that aspect of their identity. Additionally, a household with more complex needs was reportedly not matched, despite CRSA's perception that they may have been better served through the personal and responsive support available through CRISP, rather than HSP.

One potential mechanism that was suggested to overcome this, is to leverage existing information shared by refugees, such as the detailed background and migration history provided to the UNHCR during refugee status assessments. While not a substitute for direct engagement, this contextual information could help the CRISP provider better understand the household's background and needs, and support more targeted conversations—particularly valuable when communication is limited. This approach may help reduce the burden on refugee households while enhancing the quality of matches and enabling the development of richer profiles for CSGs.

While the matching process in CRISP evolved to better support informed decision-making, findings suggest that further refinement is needed to balance the preferences and needs of both refugee households and CSGs. Enhancing refugee agency, diversifying the pool of referred households, and improving data collection on unmatched cases may strengthen program responsiveness and outcomes.

6.2 Non-specialist, volunteer community supporters

SUMMARY—Non-specialist volunteer supporters

While volunteer community supporters brought strong commitment and emotional support to their roles, many lacked the professional experience or training needed to navigate complex administrative systems. This often left them feeling unprepared and overwhelmed, highlighting the limitations of relying solely on non-specialist volunteers for tasks requiring specialised knowledge or service navigation expertise.

A core feature of community settlement programs is that they harness the capacity and resources of voluntary community supporters to provide practical support to refugees during their initial settlement. On average, CRISP refugees and CSP entrants received support for a significantly greater number of settlement activities from their supporters compared to those supported through HSP.[1] Importantly, as detailed in Chapter 4, CRISP refugees supported by CSGs obtained greater social capital compared to the HSP counterparts, which was linked to positive settlement outcomes.

By design, community supporters are volunteers, but this also means they are typically non-specialists in refugee settlement or service navigation. While many bring valuable professional skills from other fields, indeed 84% of CSG members felt their group had the skills and experience to support the refugee household, their role in these programs is not grounded in formal expertise within the settlement sector. CSG survey results revealed that only a small proportion of CSG members had prior professional (10%), volunteer (18%), or mentoring (9%) experience in refugee support, and only 3 CSG members had lived experience of arriving in Australia as a refugee or humanitarian entrant.

As such, an important component of the CRISP program is that CSGs receive training to help prepare them for their role. Most CSG members (89%) rated the initial mandatory training (3-hour workshop) provided by CRSA highly, particularly the settlement handbook and task checklists. However, some CSGs felt that the training was, on occasion, too high-level and lacking in depth regarding the complexities of service systems or the emotional demands of supporting families experiencing trauma. The training also underestimated the time commitment required for certain tasks, leaving some CSGs feeling unprepared. Although voluntary ongoing training was available and rated highly (85%) by those who participated, there were some CSGs who either did not engage with the ongoing training at all or had limited engagement with the ongoing training. CSGs provided several reasons for the lack of/limited engagement—some CSGs felt the content was not relevant, others overlooked it because it was not mandatory, and others preferred the personalised support offered by CRSA. The preference for bespoke support may not only have implications for the scalability of the program, but also highlights the need for access to professional expertise that voluntary community supporters alone may not be equipped to provide.

[1] Using an average (M) of 12 settlement activities: CRISP M=10.94 vs HSP1 M=5.50; CSP M=9.59 vs HSP2 M=6.76

Professional experience or support plays an important role in facilitating successful refugee settlement, particularly in navigating complex administrative systems. While community support from volunteers is an invaluable complement, it cannot fully substitute the support and expertise of professional service providers or agencies (Fratzke & Dorst, 2019). As previously noted, some CSGs reported that the training they received was insufficient preparation for the bureaucratic and time-consuming demands of tasks, such as enrolling in Medicare, applying for tax file numbers, and accessing settlement-specific services. As a result, many CSGs described feeling overwhelmed and unprepared for the volume and complexity of these particular tasks, and did not initially anticipate how time-consuming they would be in the early stages of settlement. Indeed, there were examples of some members taking time off work to assist refugee households with administrative tasks.

Another area in which CSGs required professional support was for mental health support for the refugee households. Several CSGs attempted to provide mental health support to the families, particularly in groups that had a member who was a professional therapist. In other cases, CSGs would refer the families to humanitarian settlement organisations to manage the family's trauma and other needs or draw on ethnic advisors to better communicate and help understand their family's needs. The lack of professional training and professional support had negative effects for CSGs themselves, causing feelings of ineptitude and, in some cases, vicarious trauma in the group. CSGs who managed firsthand the trauma of their refugee families also needed emotional support. Overall, CSGs would have appreciated greater professional support, and some CSG members felt that CRISP could be more efficient and potentially support even more families if the program incorporated the support of professional caseworkers. This sentiment likely contributed to CSGs' decreased sense of satisfaction and willingness to support additional households over their 12-month period in CRISP.

In contrast, Australian Supporters in the CSP program—who are also volunteers but do not receive any formal training—seemed to be better equipped, supported, and prepared to manage these responsibilities. Most Australian Supporters who participated in the evaluation had arrived as humanitarian entrants, had extensive experience working in refugee organisations, or were familiar with the sponsorship process. Crucially, CSP entrants also receive professional support from the APOs, who assist with administrative tasks such as Medicare registration, tax file number applications, and enrolment in English classes as relevant. This professional support, coupled with Australian Supporters' personal experience and expectations of their role, is likely why Australian Supporters reported these tasks were not a burden in the qualitative interviews. Instead, many saw this as a continuation of existing responsibilities and were clear about the expectations associated with their role.

Lastly, although HSP refugees and entrants often described their relationship with HSP caseworkers as purely transactional, they also benefit from the professional support of these caseworkers and other specialist teams (e.g., housing) to assist them in their settlement.

These findings suggest that, while volunteer community supporters are well-placed to offer emotional support and companionship—a role that professional caseworkers may be less equipped to fulfil (D'Avino, 2024; Fratzke & Dorst, 2019), they often face challenges when navigating complex administrative or service-related tasks. The lack of professional training and previous experience with refugee settlement among CSGs and its burden on CSGs is consistent with community supporter programs in Canada (Haugen et al., 2020). These findings highlight the importance of complementing volunteer support with professional expertise, particularly for tasks that require specialised knowledge or familiarity with government systems. These hybrid models, which distribute responsibilities between trained professionals and community volunteers, seem effective in the CSP, and similar models have been adopted in several European countries and Canada (Fratzke & Dorst, 2019).

6.3 Relational foundations of support

SUMMARY—Relational foundations

While the relational foundations from which support is delivered in community settlement programs foster meaningful connections and social capital, they operate differently across CRISP and CSP. In CRISP, where supporters and refugees are unknown to each other, relationships can be slower to develop and sometimes involve unmet expectations of deep, reciprocal friendship. In contrast, the pre-existing relationships in CSP offered more familiar and relaxed support, albeit not always as intensive or directed as in CRISP.

A defining feature of community settlement programs that distinguishes them from traditional government-led models is the relational foundation from which support is delivered. Unlike HSP, which relies on professional caseworkers operating within formal boundaries, CRISP and CSP centre on personal relationships between supporters and refugees or entrants. This structural distinction shapes the nature of the relationships, not only between traditional and community settlement programs, but also between the 2 community programs where the type of relationship also differs—known versus unknown. These relationships were central to the design of the programs and influenced how support was delivered and experienced in distinct ways.

In CRISP, refugee households are matched with CSGs who are unknown to them prior to arrival. These relationships are newly formed and often cross-cultural, with CSGs and refugees often coming from different ethnic, linguistic, and religious backgrounds. The process of relationship-building, therefore, involves establishing trust and developing mutual understanding from the ground up. As such, relationships may take longer to form and be weighted initially toward more formal supports—thus feeling more transactional in the early stages. The qualitative data indicated that for some CSGs, expectations of forming deep friendships were not immediately realised, and, possibly owing to unfamiliarity, found it hard to establish reciprocal emotional connections. A few described the relationship as more transactional or task-focused than anticipated, likening it to a job rather than a friendship. Matched life course stage and age seemed to influence the depth of the relationship between the 2 parties, and some CSGs reflected that the language barrier and the trauma the refugee family had experienced were barriers to developing deep friendships. In some cases, mismatched expectations also extended to the support role itself—33% of CSGs felt that the refugee household had unrealistic expectations of what the group could provide. The perception that CRISP is advertised as facilitating new friendships between CSGs and refugees may be as a result of the recruitment method of CSGs, which included third parties, such as community organisations, promoting the program among their membership.

The interplay between formality and informality was further highlighted in situations where for example, a CSG responded to a late-night emergency by driving the household to the hospital. Upon reflection, the CSG noted that they had acted as a friend rather than a formal support worker who may have prioritised fostering independence. While these actions were often motivated by care and commitment, they also blurred boundaries. Some CSGs expressed concern that it could delay the development of refugee autonomy—indeed, 27% of CSGs felt the refugee household was too dependent on their group—while others hoped their continued relationship would shift from support to social connection over time.

The same relational closeness that enables strong social capital can also give rise to complex power dynamics. The unfamiliarity between supporters and refugees, combined with the formal nature of the support role in the early stages, may heighten these dynamics. CSGs were motivated by compassion and a desire to help, however, the structure of the relationship—where one party holds greater knowledge and influence—can reinforce a benefactor–beneficiary dynamic. This is particularly evident in the context of linking social capital, which, by definition, connects individuals across unequal access to resources and systems. This aligns with Macklin and colleagues' (2020) observation that compassion is embedded in sponsorship programs and as such, creates a specific dynamic. Fassin (2012) similarly argues that the issue lies not in the intentions of the helper, but in the structural relationship itself—where one party gives aid and the other depends on it. In CRISP, this dynamic occasionally manifested in paternalistic behaviours. For example, a CSG described holding a private vote among themselves to decide whether they would use the money they had raised to help a CRISP family member advance their driving goals. The potential for paternalism is not unique to CRISP and is echoed in previous literature. For example, in Ontario, Canada, one study identified instances of paternalism toward refugees, including a sentiment of cultural superiority related to social norms and behaviours, as well as controlling behaviours such as managing refugees' bank accounts, their social interactions, and intervening in areas like childcare and education (Smith et al., 2017 cited by Fratzke & Dorst, 2019). While these instances were not universal in CRISP, they highlight the importance of recognising and managing power imbalances within community-led support models to ensure that refugee agency remains central to the settlement process.

Despite these challenges, many CSGs described the importance of developing relationships with the refugee households they supported, often spending time together socially, celebrating birthdays and achievements. Indeed, 76% of CSGs reported that they had made friends with the refugee household they supported. These connections often extended beyond the formal program period, with some CSGs continuing to maintain social contact. These continued relationships were often described as fulfilling and meaningful, with CSGs expressing a strong desire to remain connected beyond the program's formal boundaries. Similarly, CRISP refugees referred to the CSGs as family, friends, and teachers, and described their relationship with the CSGs as flexible and supportive, and lifelong. While the nature and depth of these relationships varied, many CSGs found them to be deeply meaningful, and many continued to offer support beyond the program's conclusion.

In contrast, the CSP model is built on pre-existing relationships. Australian Supporters name the refugee household they hope to sponsor as part of the visa application, and in most cases, they were family members or close friends. This familiarity created a different relational dynamic—with it being inherently easier, as opposed to the effort required to develop new relationships. Almost all Australian Supporters also shared cultural background and language with the CSP entrants, which may have also served as a mitigating factor—the ease of communication and cultural familiarity may have contributed to a more relaxed and supportive relationship. The ability to revert to their home language when needed could reduce the difficulties associated with communication and cultural navigation for entrants.

Australian Supporters also commonly perceived the support they provided as a natural extension of familial or affinitive duties, rather than a new or burdensome role. This intrinsic motivation appeared to mitigate feelings that providing support was an additional responsibility or job, and contributed to a more comfortable and supportive relationship. Furthermore, most Australian Supporters indicated that the pre-arrival stage was considerably more arduous than post-arrival, specifically due to the extensive preparatory tasks required for the application, the overall high costs, and prolonged wait times when family members were in dire circumstances. Additionally, some formal settlement tasks in CSP, such as applying for Medicare, were handled by APOs, possibly allowing Australian Supporters to focus more on informal and relational aspects of support.

While the same benefactor-beneficiary relationship dynamic underpins the CSP program, the manifestation of paternalism was not evident in the CSP evaluation data, perhaps blurred by the pre-existing relationships. In some cases, the relationship was explicitly parental, such as a supporter being described as a father figure, but this was rooted in genuine familial ties rather than imposed roles. CSP entrants similarly described having a close supportive relationship with their Australian Supporters. However, while they knew they could reach out if needed, CSP entrants were mindful of the Australian Supporters' busy lives and did not want to impose. The familiarity of the relationship resulted in a dynamic that was supportive, but not necessarily intensive. This contrasts with the CRISP program, where the deliberate commitment of CSGs to support unknown refugees often fostered more determined and structured engagement.

The HSP, while structurally distinct from CRISP and CSP, offered a third point of comparison. HSP caseworkers operate within professional boundaries and are not expected to form personal friendships with refugee or entrant clients. While this structure provides clarity, it is also not immune to an embedded power imbalance within the caseworker-refugee relationship. The evaluation identified instances where caseworkers made decisions that constrained refugee agency, such as pressuring acceptance of inadequate housing or privileging communication with English-speaking male family members, thus reproducing gendered power imbalances and information disparities within the family. In another case, a refugee with the ambition to open a restaurant was advised to delay pursuing a bank loan due to financial risks. While the advice may have been practical and well-intentioned, these examples highlighted how professional authority could act as a gatekeeper to opportunity and can unintentionally constrain refugee agency even within formal systems.

Across all models, the findings underscore the importance of promoting refugee agency and independence, and managing the expectations of all involved. While community settlement programs offer unique strengths—particularly in fostering social capital and emotional support—they also present challenges that must be carefully managed. The nature of the refugee–supporter relationship is central to this balance, and understanding its dynamics is essential for refining program design, managing expectations, and ensuring that settlement pathways uphold the dignity and autonomy of those they are intended to support.

6.4 Program eligibility—CSP

SUMMARY—Program eligibility

CSP's employment-focused eligibility criteria and program design created pressure for entrants to enter the workforce prematurely at the expense of English language education, and long-term career development. This included the absence of formal income support—being ineligible for government income support and unclear expectations around supporters' financial responsibilities—and perceived expectations, attributed to the visa's eligibility criteria, that immediate employment was necessary. This, along with lengthy visa processing times that make it unviable for employers in relevant industries to commit to sponsorship or offer employment, often led to employment in roles below skill level. Furthermore, findings suggest that it functions more like a family reunification program in practice.

A distinctive feature of CSP is the eligibility criteria applied to primary applicants. CSP prioritises applicants aged 18–50 who possess adequate English proficiency and, notably, have a job offer or pathway to employment prior to arrival. These criteria are designed to promote rapid economic integration and financial independence.

Compared to HSP entrants (HSP2) and CRISP refugees, CSP entrants were significantly more likely to be employed—67% of all CSP entrants and 85% of primary CSP applicants reported that they had worked for pay in the 4 weeks prior to the survey (vs only 15% of HSP2 and 24% CRISP). While this high rate of employment may appear positive at first glance, the qualitative interviews revealed that this early employment was often in roles that did not align with CSP entrants' skills, qualifications, or long-term aspirations. Many reported feeling compelled to accept the first available job, frequently in low-skilled or low-paying sectors, leading to occupational downgrading and skills underutilisation. This pattern reflects well-documented Australian and international findings. According to recent Australian settlement sector reporting, one in 4 migrants in Australia experience skills underutilisation, and 'humanitarian entrants experience a greater skills mismatch than other migrant cohorts' (Settlement Services International (SSI), 2023). Similarly, research on Canada's PSR program, for example, shows that while privately sponsored refugees often achieve financial independence more quickly than government-assisted refugees, this does not necessarily translate into economic stability in the long term and they tend to earn significantly lower wages and face greater employment precarity (Hyndman, 2011; Fang et al., 2018; Wilkinson & Garcea, 2017). These studies caution against interpreting early employment as successful integration, noting that financial necessity often drives premature labour market entry, rather than meaningful alignment with skills or career goals.

The cost of early employment also extended to language acquisition and education. While motivation to improve English was consistently high across all groups, only 41% of CSP entrants had studied English since arriving in Australia, compared to 88% of HSP2 and 97% of CRISP refugees. Among those who had not participated in language education, 63% cited work hours as the primary barrier.[1] This trade-off between immediate income and long-term skill development is well documented in international literature. Derksen and Teixeira (2023) found that privately sponsored refugees in Canada often sacrificed English lessons to meet financial obligations, limiting access to higher-paid or stable employment. Lenard (2019) similarly observed that sponsors frequently view employment as a measure of success, thus encouraging economic self-sufficiency, overlooking the sustainability or quality of employment outcomes.

These pressures are shaped not only by the visa's employment expectations but also by the absence of formal financial or income support. Unlike CRISP and HSP refugees who are eligible for government income support if needed, CSP entrants are excluded from most working-age social security payments during their first year in Australia. While the visa does not mandate employment, the lack of a financial safety net creates a strong incentive to work immediately. This was reflected in the interviews with CSP entrants, many of whom expressed the pressure they felt to be employed due to the absence of income support. For many, the financial insecurity was a source of ongoing stress, and they were disappointed that they were unable to pursue English language education or further study during their first year of settlement. This pressure is further compounded by the structure of the CSP itself—Australian Supporters are not formally required to provide financial support equivalent to income support, rather, they provide an AoS whereby the assurer agrees to repay the Australian Government for any working-age social security payments that the Government makes to the CSP entrant during the first year in Australia. As such, the perceived expectations attributed to the visa—by both entrants and supporters—often lead to an implicit understanding that employment is necessary from the outset, even if it compromises longer-term integration goals. This was demonstrated in interviews with Australian Supporters, who were aware of their obligations under the AoS but generally did not anticipate needing to provide financial assistance, expressing confidence

[1] Note, only 3 CSP entrants reported in the survey that they spoke English fluently prior to arriving in Australia as a reason for not studying English.

that entrants would readily find employment in what they perceived to be a strong and accessible labour market. In contrast, in other privately sponsored refugee models internationally, such as Canada's PSR program, which also excludes access to government income support, sponsors are explicitly responsible for and need to demonstrate their ability to provide financial support for the first 12 months. Furthermore, there is no requirement for applicants to demonstrate a pathway to employment. As a result, while financial pressures still exist, there is less perceived obligation for refugees to enter the workforce immediately, and greater clarity around the sponsor's role in supporting a gradual integration process, including through financial assistance.

Visa processing times further exacerbate these challenges. Australian Supporters noted that, due to uncertain arrival times, many potential employers were unable or reluctant to guarantee a job offer, as they could not leave positions unfilled indefinitely. As a result, Australian Supporters frequently secured employment by offering jobs within their own or family-run businesses, or through personal networks. While these networks or the ability to employ entrants themselves were invaluable, without which, it may have been challenging for CSP entrants to meet the eligibility requirements, these jobs rarely matched CSP entrants' skills or aspirations. Moreover, the long visa processing times mean that, even when CSP entrants have skills suited to particular industries, they are unlikely to secure jobs in those fields, as opportunities cannot be held open for years. With visa processing times currently extending up to 8 years or more, this delay may undermine the program's intent to prioritise economic potential and contributes to a mismatch between CSP entrants' qualifications and the jobs they ultimately accept.

While CSP is formally positioned as an employment-focused humanitarian pathway, evaluation findings suggest that it functions more like a family reunification program in practice. The majority of CSP entrants in the evaluation were sponsored by family or friends, rather than employers or community organisations. The lengthy processing times and reliance on informal support structures raise questions about the program's suitability as a mechanism for economic integration. Without timely visa processing, the program risks prioritising short-term labour market entry over sustainable and meaningful integration. In contrast, similar visa pathways being piloted internationally, such as Canada's Economic Mobility Pathways Pilot, include guarantees of visa processing within 6 months, enabling more realistic alignment between employment offers and arrival timelines. Similarly, Australia's Skilled Refugee Labour Agreement Pilot (implemented between July 2021 and June 2025) prioritises applicants and aim for the process to take 3 months.

In sum, while CSP entrants often achieve rapid labour market participation, this is frequently characterised by precarious employment, occupational downgrading, and limited opportunities for language acquisition and career development. These outcomes are shaped by a combination of financial pressure, perceived visa expectations, and structural limitations—including the absence of income support and extended visa processing times. International comparisons highlight that while similar sponsorship models also exclude government financial assistance, clearer sponsor obligations and faster processing times can mitigate some of these pressures. In contrast, the CSP's design features interact in ways that constrain choice and opportunity, raising important questions about its effectiveness as an employment-focused resettlement pathway.

6.5 Regional locations—CRISP

SUMMARY—Regional locations

The evaluation indicated that regional locations have the capacity and commitment to support settlement outcomes for CRISP refugees. Refugees settled in regional areas achieved comparable outcomes to those in major cities, though they did experience some challenges accessing specialised services. CSGs in regional areas found the experience less challenging and had sustained high levels of enjoyment, highlighting the strengths of regional communities in supporting refugee settlement.

A distinctive feature of the CRISP design is its ability to facilitate refugee settlement in regional locations, enabled by its reliance on community-led support rather than professional service providers. This decentralised model allows for placements in areas traditionally underserved by government-funded agencies (i.e., HSP providers).

Findings from both quantitative and qualitative data sources indicate that regional locations can support refugee settlement effectively. Findings presented in the *CRISP Evaluation Program Outcomes report* showed parity in the level of formal and informal support provided by CSGs across both regional and urban settings, indicating that community groups in regional areas delivered comparable settlement assistance. Importantly, there was no significant difference in refugees' sense of belonging nor self-sufficiency between regional and metropolitan locations (see Chapter 4.2), suggesting that regional communities are equally capable of fostering these critical settlement outcomes. Furthermore, refugees settled in regional areas were more likely to gain employment compared to their counterparts in major cities—though, not dissimilar to those working in major cities, the nature of this employment was often in low-skilled or low-paying industries, which did not always align with refugees' prior experience or aspirations.

Nevertheless, regional settlement was not without challenges. Refugees in these areas reportedly encountered barriers related to limited access to specialised services, including healthcare and education. Households requiring ongoing medical care or specialist support, for example, children with learning needs, often struggled due to the absence of local services and the need to travel long distances, sometimes to major cities. Transport limitations compounded these difficulties, affecting access not only to medical services but also to English classes and culturally specific goods. The lack of established ethnic communities in regional areas also contributed to feelings of isolation, with fewer opportunities for cultural connection.

Despite these challenges, many refugee households in regional areas who participated in the interviews, seemed to be satisfied with life in regional communities, adapting to the slower pace, improved their language skills, and gradually integrated into local social networks. That said, as reported in Chapter 7.4, some were considering relocating to major cities to access new opportunities.

Focus group data from regional CSGs reinforced these findings, highlighting the strengths of regional communities in supporting refugee settlement. CSGs described their communities as resourceful and welcoming, with individuals eager to contribute time, energy, and connections. The regional lifestyle was also seen as beneficial to mental health and overall wellbeing. Notably, CSGs in regional areas were less likely to report that they found supporting refugee households challenging,[1] compared to those in major cities, and continued to express high levels of enjoyment with their involvement over time—contrasting with a decline in reported enjoyment among CSGs in major cities.[2]

[1] The percentage of CSGs who 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that supporting the CRISP household had been challenging at timepoint 2: Regional 63%; Major cities 80%.
[2] The percentage of CSGs who 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that supporting the CRISP household had been enjoyable: Regional T1=82%, T2=86%; Major cities T1: 88%, T2 73%.

Furthermore, CSGs in regional locations were significantly more likely to be willing to support additional refugee households in the future.[1] However, mirroring refugees' accounts, CSGs acknowledged that not all households were equally suited to regional life. CSGs felt that refugees with severe health conditions, limited English proficiency, or a strong reliance on ethnic community networks faced greater difficulties. The limited availability of interpreters and multilingual services further exacerbated these challenges.

CSGs also identified systemic gaps in settlement support, particularly in the geographic distribution of services. While some programs, such as refugee health initiatives, offer extensive support, they are often concentrated in specific regions, making access difficult for those outside these areas. Additionally, service providers in regional areas were not always familiar with the specific needs of refugee populations or the entitlements available to them, such as prioritised Medicare processing under the Services Australia Refugee Service Offer. Limited access to specialist schools and medical professionals for chronic conditions were also noted as barriers.

Overall, the evidence suggests that regional areas possess the foundational capacity to support refugee settlement under CRISP. Refugees demonstrated adaptability, and the sustained support from CSGs played a critical role in enabling successful integration. To further strengthen regional settlement outcomes, there may be value in enhancing coordination with local governments—particularly those voluntarily designated as 'Welcome Zones'—to ensure that essential services such as healthcare, Centrelink, and Medicare are adequately equipped and informed to meet the needs of refugee households.

[1] The percentage of CSGs who would be willing to support another refugee household in the future: Regional 61%; Major cities 44%.

7. Factors influencing the scalability and sustainability of the program

This chapter explores the factors that could influence the sustainability of both programs and the scalability of CRISP.

These include community expectations of additionality, sustaining a volunteer engagement, prolonged support relationships, the effects of refugee relocation on community morale and engagement, and the resources required to reflect the varied activities of administering the programs. These considerations are critical for ensuring that CRISP can be expanded over time.

7.1 The expectation of additionality

SUMMARY—Expectation of additionality

Some CSG members expressed disappointment that their efforts would not expand refugee resettlement places in Australia as expected. While CRISP aligns with international models that support UNHCR-referred refugees without additionality, the CSP—given its structure and minimal reliance on government support—presents a strong opportunity to expand Australia's humanitarian intake through an additional or complementary pathway, aligning with similar international models.

Concerns have been raised—both internationally and within Australia—that community settlement programs, particularly private sponsorship models, risk eroding protection space for UNHCR-referred refugees, which may be inconsistent with the humanitarian objectives of resettlement (Bond, 2021; Hirsch et al., 2019). The literature notes that one way to address this is for sponsorship models to provide additional places—the principle of 'additionality'—rather than replace government-funded resettlement places (Prantl, 2022). In Australia, neither CRISP nor CSP currently offer additionality.

Evaluation findings highlight that some CSGs who had chosen to participate in the pilot program, did so in good faith, expecting that CRISP would create additional refugee resettlement places beyond the usual humanitarian intake, if scaled. Community sponsorship programs rely on volunteers, many of whom engaged in CRISP due to personal and political sentiments associated with welcoming refugees, acknowledging Australia's history of migration, and wishing to give back as descendants of former refugees. One CSG member expressed concern about the return on their volunteer investment, emphasising that they wanted to make a meaningful impact rather than assume responsibility for obligations that should rest with the government. Disappointment arose for some CSGs engaged in the pilot when it became clear the program would not provide additional places but rather reallocate existing ones. Similarly, there was some evidence that additionality was important to prospective volunteers for the CRISP program, with some declining to participate and form a CSG once they understood the program was not providing additional places. The scalability and credibility of CRISP depends largely on the positive word-of-mouth and experiences shared by CSGs who have participated in the program. Future volunteers are also likely to weigh the significant time and financial investment required against the impact achieved and how well it aligns with their values. However, additionality may not be the only motivating factor and exploring other ways to motivate prospective CSGs is important.

Unlike CSP entrants, CRISP refugees are UNHCR-referred and thus do not dilute protection space for those considered most in need. Furthermore, CRISP refugees are entitled to all the same services and supports (including working-age government income support) as HSP refugees. Should the needs of CRISP households exceed the capacity of their CSG, or if the refugee household relocates, they can be referred to the HSP for additional support. CRISP's

design aligns closely with Canada's BVOR program, which supports UNHCR-referred refugees through a shared model of government and community sponsorship. Like CRISP, BVOR does not offer additionality (see Table 1), reflecting a broader international precedent for such models. In this context, CRISP's current design aligns with established international programs. Instead, the positive outcomes associated with community-led sponsorship—particularly the strong settlement experiences and outcomes of refugees supported through CRISP—could be leveraged as a motivating factor for volunteers. For many CSGs, recognising that refugees benefit from improved integration and wellbeing through community support may help sustain motivation, even in the absence of additionality.

In contrast, CSP entrants—while required to meet the criteria for a Global Special Humanitarian visa—are not UNHCR-referred and do not have access to government working-age income support. Australian Supporters are responsible for pre-arrival costs (such as flights), the VAC, and pay significant fees for pre- and post-arrival support from APOs, including assistance with formal settlement tasks such as Medicare registration and enrolment in English classes. These responsibilities are not government-funded, and the program is largely sustained through funding from family and community. This structure closely resembles Canada's PSR program, which also supports non-UNHCR-referred refugees but offers additionality by creating resettlement places beyond the government's annual quota.

Given these distinctions, there is a strong case for CSP to offer additionality. The program already operates with minimal government support and places significant responsibility on Australian Supporters, making it well-positioned to expand Australia's humanitarian intake without compromising protection space. While some CSGs expressed disappointment that their efforts did not result in additional places, recognising that community sponsorship can lead to better outcomes for refugees may help reinforce the value of their contribution and sustain engagement in the short term. However, the expectation of additionality, if not addressed, could impact the sustainability of community settlement programs that rely predominantly on community support. As such, as CRISP matures, the potential to incorporate additionality should be revisited, consistent with the principle that pilot programs may initially operate within existing quotas but aim to become additional over time (Tan, 2021). In the interim, CSP presents a viable pathway for expanding Australia's resettlement capacity in a way that aligns with international best practice.

7.2 Recruiting and retaining community supporters

SUMMARY—Recruitment & retention

The sustainability and scalability of CRISP depends on both retaining experienced CSG members and recruiting new supporters. While nearly half of CSG members expressed willingness to support another refugee household, emotional and financial challenges—including fundraising—limit repeat sponsorship. Positive group dynamics, perceived impact, and strong community connections were key drivers of re-engagement. High program endorsement rates and successful refugee outcomes present opportunities to attract new supporters and expand community networks.

The sustainability and scalability of community settlement programs such as CRISP depend heavily on the capacity to recruit and retain community supporters. The program relies on volunteers to provide intensive, year-long support to refugee households. Unlike the HSP model, which is underpinned by government-funded caseworkers, CRISP mobilises community resources, both human and financial, to facilitate refugee settlement. While this model has demonstrated significant benefits for refugee outcomes, it also presents challenges in maintaining a steady and reliable pool of supporters.

As presented throughout the report, evaluation findings consistently highlighted the strength of community settlement models in delivering high-quality, personalised support to refugees. However, sustaining this model requires careful attention to the experiences of community supporters. Repeat sponsorship—where CSGs support additional refugee households after completing their initial commitment—offers a potentially efficient pathway to scale. Repeat sponsors require little to no recruitment effort, have already completed the prerequisites (e.g., background checks and screening) and training, and bring

valuable experience and established networks. Nearly half (49%) of CSG members indicated a willingness to support another household in the future, suggesting potential for re-engagement, though it also highlights the need to maintain a focus on recruiting new supporters to ensure program sustainability.

Multiple regression analyses revealed several key factors influencing the likelihood of repeat sponsorship. CSG members were more willing to support another household if they did not find the experience challenging, reported high levels of group cohesion, formed friendships with members of other CSGs, and believed they had positively influenced community attitudes toward refugees. Notably, neither the intensity of support provided (e.g., hours spent), nor personal or group characteristics (e.g., employment status, group size), nor the size of the refugee household were associated with willingness to re-sponsor. These findings suggest that the quality of the group experience and perceived impact are more influential than logistical or demographic factors.

Bivariate analyses further illuminated the dynamics of supporter retention. Willingness to re-sponsor was higher among CSGs who avoided giving conflicting advice, and did not find the experience emotionally draining or challenging. Supporters who made friends with the refugee household or with other CSG members, felt they made a meaningful contribution to settlement outcomes, and believed they influenced community attitudes, were also more likely to consider re-sponsoring. Higher levels of self-efficacy and fewer barriers—such as language difficulties, unrealistic expectations from refugee households, or that the refugee household was too dependent on the group—also contributed to positive intentions to re-engage. **Table 2** summarises the factors influencing CSG members' willingness to re-sponsor. See Table A20 for full results.

***Table 2**. Factors influencing CSG members' likelihood of repeat sponsorship*

Factors influencing the likelihood of repeat sponsorship	
Willing to repeat sponsor	**Not willing to repeat sponsor**
Positive group cohesion/dynamics	Found providing support challenging
Made friends with members from other CSGs	Found providing support emotionally draining
Felt that the CSG positively influenced the way others in their community treat refugees	CSG provided conflicting advice to refugee household
Felt that the CSG made a difference to the settlement of refugees	CSG couldn't help the refugee household at times due to language barriers
Made friends with refugee household	The refugee household was too dependent on the CSG
High levels of self-efficacy	The refugee household had unrealistic expectations about what support the CSG could provide

All the factors in the table were significant at $p<0.05$.

Despite these encouraging indicators, quantitative and qualitative data underscored the emotional and financial toll of sponsorship. Nearly half (46%) of CSG members found the experience emotionally draining, and many reported burnout in the focus groups. Prior to the refugees' arrival, CSGs were responsible for securing funds to sponsor and support the households. This entailed fundraising in the community, hosting events, engaging schools and churches, and in some cases, internal group members contributing funds to cover costs before Centrelink payments were issued. While these efforts were often successful, many CSGs noted that they had exhausted their fundraising networks—drawing heavily on family, friends, and local communities. The prospect of sponsoring additional families would require expanding these networks or developing new fundraising strategies, which some CSGs felt was too great an effort at the time. This reinforces the importance of recruiting new CSGs, who bring fresh networks and untapped community resources.

External pressures such as rising living costs, limited affordable housing, and fluctuating community sentiment also shaped the feasibility of repeat sponsorship. Some CSGs expressed concern that their communities, while supportive of one refugee family, might not be willing or able to welcome additional households. Personal circumstances, such as retirement or travel plans, or commitments to their own families, for example, being a stay-at-home mother or on maternity leave, also influenced CSG members' willingness to support another household.

These challenges are not unique to Australia. Promoting repeat sponsorship remains a concern across global programs, and there is ongoing focus on sponsor experience in hopes of keeping community sponsors engaged and interested. Evidence from Canada's BVOR program similarly identified financial, emotional, and time burdens as barriers to repeat sponsorship (IRCC, 2021). The decline in sponsorship rates after the program's first year highlighted the need for greater promotion of the pathway, particularly beyond the existing supporter community.

The potential for growth through new supporter recruitment remains strong. A significant majority (83%) of CSG members indicated they would recommend the CRISP program to others. This endorsement, coupled with positive refugee outcomes, presents a valuable opportunity to leverage word-of-mouth referrals and community networks. Strategic storytelling and visibility of successful settlement experiences may help build public interest and engagement, as seen in Canada's private sponsorship programs, which benefited from positive public narratives and a culture of welcome (Bond & Maniatis, 2022).

As outlined in Chapter 6.1, expanding the diversity of the refugee cohort may also attract new supporters. Advocacy groups and community organisations may be more inclined to participate if they see alignment with their values or interests. Being responsive to global humanitarian needs and enabling pathways for refugees from a broader range of backgrounds may help mobilise new interest and support.

Overall, while repeat sponsorship offers an efficient way to support the sustainability of the CRISP program, the demanding nature of community support may make this challenging in the short term. As such, a dual strategy is needed. One that supports re-engagement among experienced CSGs, while also investing in and exploring opportunities to engage new supporters (and communities). This could be achieved through expanding the diversity of the refugee cohort, and leveraging positive supporter experiences and communicating the positive outcomes for refugees, thereby, not only attracting new supporters, but also fostering broader community engagement, in turn expanding fundraising networks. By doing so, community settlement programs can build a resilient and scalable model that continues to deliver strong outcomes for refugees and communities alike.

7.3 Providing support beyond 12 months

SUMMARY—Post-program support

Many CSGs continued to offer informal support to refugee households beyond the 12-months, however, the nature of this support was typically limited and did not appear to prevent or delay their willingness to sponsor new families. Nevertheless, there is the potential that ongoing support may impact the capacity of supporters.

Findings from the focus groups suggest that most CSGs continued to maintain relationships and provide occasional support to the CRISP households beyond the formal 12-month program period. This continued involvement tended to be informal, episodic, and driven by specific needs or emergencies, rather than sustained, intensive support. By this stage, CSGs perceived that the refugee households were largely self-sufficient and capable of managing their day-to-day affairs independently, and the ongoing connection was framed more in terms of friendship and community ties than active case management. In this sense, while support did extend past the program's official timeframe, it no longer demanded the same level of time or emotional investment from CSGs.

Importantly, this ongoing support was not identified by CSGs as a barrier to supporting a new household. Instead, as noted in Chapter 7.2, other factors emerged more prominently, such as a need to first bring closure to their current support experience before considering a new commitment. This often included taking time to rest, reflect on lessons learned, and re-evaluate internal group dynamics. Some groups also spoke of the emotional intensity of the sponsorship process and the need for a recovery period before re-engaging. Others emphasised the need to reorganise or recruit new members before beginning another sponsorship cycle. Fundraising, particularly for securing adequate housing for new arrivals, was frequently mentioned as a practical barrier to immediate re-engagement.

Although the qualitative evidence did not indicate that ongoing support beyond 12-months impacted CSGs willingness to sponsor future households, ongoing support for refugee households, even if informally, could still require emotional and physical capacity of the CSGs and the impact of this should be monitored.

7.4 Relocation and the impact on the community

SUMMARY—Relocation

Relocation during or after the CRISP program, was predominantly from regional areas. However, this was primarily driven by personal or structural factors—such as social isolation, including from their co-ethnic community, limited access to services, and economic opportunity—rather than CSG or program shortcomings. Nevertheless, these relocations were a source of disappointment for CSGs who had invested emotional and financial resources, and had hoped to build lasting connections.

Despite best efforts, relocation is an expected feature of refugee resettlement, as individuals and families adjust to their new environment and seek opportunities that better align with their social, cultural, and economic needs. Within the CRISP program, relocations occurred at 2 key points: shortly after arrival—at which point they are transferred to HSP—or at the conclusion of the 12-month program. During the evaluation period, approximately 10% of households exited CRISP early, with the majority of these exits due to relocation. In both cases, the most common relocation involved refugees who initially settled in regional areas moving to a major city. While transferring from CRISP to HSP was captured by the administrative data, relocating at the end of the program was only captured qualitatively from a select number of households and their CSGs, so the full extent is not known.

CRISP refugees who relocated soon after arrival cited several reasons for relocating. Feelings of isolation in their first place of resettlement were common. For some, the small community lifestyle was either unexpected or undesirable, proving either too quiet or, for one family, frightening due to the animals and noises that they were not accustomed to, having moved from a bigger town in their previous country. One refugee described feeling under-prepared for their initial location—despite receiving a photograph of the house from the CSG, it did not convey how remote the location was. Another reflected that with stronger English skills or the ability to drive, they might have remained in their initial settlement location. Being in a community without people who spoke the same language and shared the same ethnic background was a challenge and made some of the refugees feel quite lonely and depressed.

Becoming aware that they had friends or acquaintances in other towns and cities also encouraged some refugees to relocate to be closer to friends and people from the same ethnic background. A few refugees also noted that finding appropriate food was challenging in regional places, and they needed to travel far to find it. Limited transport compounded this issue for those unable to drive, and was also a general factor contributing to people's desire to relocate.

Greater economic and educational opportunities were also cited as reasons to relocate to bigger cities from regional areas. Refugees with specific occupations or business aspirations—such as barbers or restaurateurs—found regional areas too small to support their livelihoods. For example, for refugees interested in starting businesses that served an ethnic clientele, relocating to a major city was necessary to access their ethnic community as well as greater ethnic resources, goods, and groceries. CRISP refugees described driving several hours to source ethnic groceries, which they felt was unsustainable in the long term. Others relocated to access better employment prospects aligned with their or their children's education. Access to in-person English classes was another factor, with some refugees reporting long travel times or reliance on online learning, which they found challenging, in regional areas.

The few CRISP households who participated in the interviews who had or were considering relocating at the end of the program cited similar reasons, particularly for economic or social opportunities.

While relocation was more common among CRISP refugees, some HSP refugees also moved—typically within the same area—due to housing pressures such as rent increases or landlords reclaiming properties. One HSP family planned to move interstate to join a larger ethnic community and pursue business opportunities, echoing motivations seen among CRISP refugees.

CSGs also identified housing affordability as a driver of relocation. In some cases, they actively encouraged families to move to cities where home ownership or proximity to cultural communities was more feasible.

Overall, relocation decisions appeared to be shaped more by personal and structural factors than by shortcomings in the support or relationships provided by CSGs. Indeed, all of the CRISP refugees who relocated early in the program expressed gratitude and, for some, were overwhelmed at the level of welcome and support they received from the CSGs. Several even remained in contact with their CSGs after exiting the program.

Nonetheless, relocations could be disappointing for CSGs. Many had invested significant time and emotional energy into supporting the household and had hoped to build lasting relationships within their local community. Some felt a sense of loss or even embarrassment when families moved away, particularly when local community members had contributed time and resources to the sponsorship effort.

7.5 Resources required to implement community settlement programs

SUMMARY—Program resources

To ensure the sustainability and scalability of the programs, the resources needed to administer the community settlement programs need to reflect the intensity and duration of support required and additional activities, such as the recruitment of CSGs for CRISP and collecting quality program data need to be resourced.

The successful delivery of the CRISP and CSP programs relies on intermediary organisations—currently CRSA and APOs, respectively—who provide support and oversight to community supporters. These organisations play a critical role in enabling the successful settlement of refugee families by guiding and assisting community supporters throughout the process.

CRSA's role in CRISP is particularly broad and possibly resource-intensive. It is responsible for generating interest in the program and recruiting CSGs, which involves sustained outreach, public engagement, and community education. Once potential CSGs are identified, CRSA undertakes a comprehensive vetting process, guiding groups through police checks, fundraising, readiness assessments, and delivering training to CSGs. CRSA is also responsible for matching refugee families with CSGs—a complex task requiring careful consideration of geographic, cultural, and logistical factors. After the refugee family arrives, CRSA continues to provide ongoing support to CSGs, including responding to queries, facilitating connections with ethnic advisors or peer groups, and conducting regular check-ins. This post-arrival phase is particularly demanding, with 80% of CSGs still relying on CRSA for support 10–12 months after the refugee household's arrival, often requiring tailored assistance.

In contrast, APOs operate under a fee-for-service model and focus their efforts primarily on supporting Australian Supporters during the pre-arrival phase. This includes assisting with the preparation of visa applications, navigating the Expression of Interest (EOI) process, and liaising with government and service providers. Some APOs offer free consultations during the early stages, but most of their support is funded through fees paid by Australian Supporters. Once the refugee family arrives, APOs shift their focus to providing direct support to the family, often helping with administrative tasks such as enrolling in Medicare, setting up bank accounts, and accessing essential services. APOs with professional casework experience are often better equipped to provide this support, leveraging established relationships with mainstream service providers to facilitate smoother integration.

A key distinction between the 2 models lies in the distribution and focus of support. CRSA is responsible for driving the entire CRISP process—from recruitment and vetting to matching and long-term support of CSGs—while APOs concentrate on technical and administrative support during the CSP visa application process and provide direct assistance to refugee families post-arrival. These structural differences may explain the varied experiences of community supporters. Australian Supporters often describe the pre-arrival phase of CSP as particularly arduous, given the complexity of the visa process and the level of preparation required. Meanwhile, CSGs report that the early post-arrival period of CRISP is the most time-intensive, reflecting the hands-on support required during initial settlement.

Both APOs and CRSA operate within financial constraints and may contribute in-kind support to sustain their operations. Although APOs charge a fee for their services, several reported offering free consultations to Australian Supporters during the expression of interest phase. Similarly, CRSA works within a fixed budget and may rely on in-kind time to fulfil all responsibilities.

Together, these findings highlight the substantial and varied resources required to operate community settlement programs effectively. The intensity and duration of support provided by intermediary organisations—whether to community supporters or directly to refugee families—are central to the sustainability and scalability of both CSP and CRISP.

8. Conclusion

The report integrated findings from the CRISP and CSP program evaluations that aimed to assess the viability and effectiveness of community settlement models for refugee resettlement in Australia. By comparing outcomes and experiences with a matched control group from the government-assisted program, HSP, the evaluations assessed the extent to which observed outcomes were attributable to the programs, rather than individual characteristics. Drawing on multiple sources of qualitative and quantitative data, the report synthesised findings to provide a comprehensive understanding of outcomes and implementation of the 2 programs.

The findings demonstrated that refugees and entrants who settled through community-led programs achieved outcomes comparable to—and in many cases exceeded—those supported through the government-assisted HSP pathway. These results are consistent with international evidence and underscore the value of community involvement in refugee resettlement. A notable strength of community settlement models is the social capital observed, particularly among CRISP refugees. This is particularly important as, aligning with international evidence, the analysis showed that social capital is closely linked to positive settlement outcomes, especially in the short term. Strong community networks appeared to foster a sense of belonging, self-sufficiency, and economic integration.

The positive outcomes for CSGs as a result of participating in CRISP were also demonstrated. These included new social connections and feeling fulfilled, a deeper understanding of refugee experiences and the settlement landscape, and a greater appreciation of refugees' contributions.

In addition to outcome analysis, the report examined features of the community settlement programs to inform future policy and practice. These included the relational foundations of support provided through community settlement programs and the engagement of non-specialist volunteer supporters. In addition, for CRISP, the matching process and the ability to settle refugees in regional locations, as well as the program eligibility settings for CSP, were examined. Each of these features shaped how programs operated in practice and influenced the experiences of both community supporters and refugee households. Understanding these operational dynamics is essential for refining program delivery and enhancing participant experiences.

Factors that could influence the sustainability of both programs and the scalability of CRISP were also presented. These included the potential impact of unmet community expectations that participation in these programs would contribute to the development of complementary pathways—following the principle of additionality—and the resources required to reflect the varied activities of administering the programs. Additionally for CRISP, the need for a dual approach to retain existing and recruit new CSGs, the impact of prolonged support relationships on volunteer capacity, and the effects of refugee relocation on community morale and engagement were highlighted. These considerations are critical for ensuring that CRISP can be expanded over time.

Overall, the findings support the conclusion that CRISP and CSP represent viable and effective approaches to refugee resettlement in Australia. With continued refinement and support, these programs have the potential to deliver meaningful, long-term benefits for refugees, host communities, and the broader settlement systems.

9. Recommendations

In response to the findings, the following recommendations are proposed, grouped according to the community settlement program they are intended to address.

Recommendations for CRISP

1. The Department of Home Affairs should consider introducing onshore orientation sessions for unlinked (CRISP) refugees, similar to the orientation programs provided to CSP entrants by APOs. This should include, but is not limited to, information about the role and boundaries of supporters, and their rights in Australia. Chapter 6.3
2. The Department of Home Affairs should facilitate collaborations with regional local governments, including those designated as 'Welcome Zones', to strengthen the capacity of local services such as healthcare, Centrelink, Medicare, and other essential supports, ensuring they are appropriately equipped and informed to meet the needs of refugee households settled in regional locations. Chapter 6.5
3. The Department of Home Affairs should consider promoting that CSGs are connected to professional support that complements the support community supporters provide, similar to the professional support the APOs provide to complete settlement tasks that require specialised knowledge or service navigation expertise. Chapter 6.2
4. The Department of Home Affairs should explore the feasibility of sharing more detailed information about the refugee household from the existing documentation it receives with the CRISP provider to further strengthen the matching process. Chapter 6.1
5. The Department of Home Affairs should explore the potential for diversifying the refugee households identified and referred to CRISP. Chapter 6.1 & Chapter 7.2
6. The Department of Home Affairs needs to ensure the CRISP provider is appropriately resourced to provide the ongoing tailored support that the CSGs require. Chapter 7.5
7. The Department of Home Affairs should facilitate the promotion of the CRISP program, leveraging supporters' positive experiences and communicating the benefits and positive outcomes for refugees supported through these programs. Chapter 7.2

Recommendations for CSP

8. The Department of Home Affairs should review the viability of the CSP program in its current form as an appropriate employment pathway for humanitarian entrants. Chapter 6.4 Two alternative policy directions should be explored:

- Repositioning CSP as a family reunification pathway—including clarifying Australian Supporters' financial responsibilities under this model—while programs such as the Skilled Refugee Labour Agreement Pilot are developed as the primary employment-focused visa stream for refugees and humanitarian entrants.
- Enhancing CSP's function as an employment pathway by committing to faster visa processing times, thereby increasing employer confidence and improving access to job opportunities aligned with skills for prospective entrants.

Recommendations for CRISP & CSP

9. The Department of Home Affairs should consider making the CSP a complementary pathway, i.e., following the principle of 'additionality'. In addition, the Department of Home Affairs should monitor the impact of non-additionality on volunteer engagement in the CRISP program and review the need to reconsider its additionality status to support long-term program sustainability. Chapter 7.1
10. The Department of Home Affairs should ensure monitoring and data collection of programs (including funding providers to undertake this work) and follow the refugees/entrants over a longer period of time—using linked administrative data (e.g., PLIDA) complemented with qualitative data—to understand the long-term impact of these programs. Chapter 3

Recommendations for CRISP, CSP, & HSP

11. The Department of Home Affairs should coordinate or collaborate with other government agencies and AMEP providers to further strengthen access to English language training for refugees/entrants in the workforce. Chapter 4.3
12. The Department of Home Affairs should facilitate collaboration with other government agencies and civil society groups to ensure that digital literacy programs are available and offered to all refugees and humanitarian entrants, to equip them with the skills and confidence to access services and job opportunities using various digital technologies. Chapter 4.4

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Appendix

Appendix A—Additional results

A1—Factors influencing optimal settlement outcomes

Table A1. Overview of the 6 contextual or individual factors that were significantly associated with the 3 key settlement outcomes, for each group

	Social integration	Economic integration	Self-sufficiency
Social capital	CRISP, HSP1, & CSP	CRISP & HSP1	CRISP & HSP1
Location		CRISP	
English		CRISP	All
Digital literacy		CRISP & HSP1	All
Psychological distress	CRISP & HSP1		
Gender		CSP, HSP1, & HSP2	HSP1 & HSP2

Table A2. Sense of belonging in local community and Self-sufficiency by Social capital 10-12 months after arrival

	Sense of belonging in local community Index								Self-sufficiency Index							
	CRISP		HSP1		CSP		HSP2		CRISP		HSP1		CSP		HSP2	
	n	Mean	n	Mean	n	Mean	n	Mean	n	Mean	n	Mean	n	Mean	n	Mean
Bonding capital																
No	64	2.72	55	2.52	17	2.9	14	2.57	64	2.14	55	2.07	17	2.58	14	2.35
Yes	42	2.69	68	2.67	29	2.86	19	2.49	42	2.16	68	2.34**	28	2.55	19	2.33
Bridging capital																
No	78	2.72	102	2.58	41	2.86	29	2.5	78	2.06	102	2.15	40	2.54	29	2.29
Yes	28	2.68	21	2.71	5	3.00	4	2.7	28	2.41*	21	2.53**	5	2.73	4	2.69
Linking capital																
No	3	1.17	23	2.39	10	2.72^	8	2.48	3	2.71	23	2.19	10	2.26	8	2.30
Yes	103	2.75***	100	2.65*	35	2.92*	25	2.54	103	2.14	100	2.22	35	2.65*	25	2.36

*Ttest *p<0.05 **p<0.01 ***p<0.001 = Significantly higher*

^70% had a family member as the community supporter

Those highlighted in yellow remained significant after adjusting for other factors

Table A3. Paid job in previous 4 weeks by Social capital 10-12 months after arrival

	Paid job=yes			
	CRISP N=106	HSP1 N=123	CSP N=46	HSP2 N=33
Bonding capital				
No	19%	7%	65%	16%
Yes	31%	13%	69%	16%
Bridging capital				
No	15%	11%	63%	14%
Yes	46%**	10%	100%^	25%
Linking capital				
No	0%	9%	58%	n/a
Yes	24%	11%	71%	n/a

*Chi2 test *p<0.05 **p<0.01 ***p<0.001 = Significantly higher*

^Only 5 people with bridging capital

Those highlighted in yellow remained significant after adjusting for other factors

Table A4. Sense of belonging in local community and Self-sufficiency by Location 10-12 months after arrival

	Sense of belonging in local community Index				Self-sufficiency Index			
	CRISP		HSP1		CRISP		HSP1	
	n	Mean	n	Mean	n	Mean	n	Mean
Location								
Regional	37	2.77	23	2.65	37	2.06	23	2.32
Major cities	69	2.68	100	2.59	69	2.2	100	2.19

*Ttest *p<0.05 **p<0.01 ***p<0.001 = Significantly higher*

Those highlighted in yellow remained significant after adjusting for other factors

Table A5. Paid job in previous 4 weeks by Location 10-12 months after arrival

	Paid job=yes	
	CRISP N=106	HSP1 N=123
Location		
Regional	46%***	4%
Major cities	12%	12%

*Chi2 test *p<0.05 **p<0.01 ***p<0.001 = Significantly higher*

Those highlighted in yellow remained significant after adjusting for other factors

Table A6. Sense of belonging in local community and Self-sufficiency by English proficiency 10-12 months after arrival

	Sense of belonging in local community Index								Self-sufficiency Index							
	CRISP		HSP1		CSP		HSP2		CRISP		HSP1		CSP		HSP2	
	n	Mean	n	Mean	n	Mean	n	Mean	n	Mean	n	Mean	n	Mean	n	Mean
English proficiency																
None/Not well	64	2.75	82	2.57	22	2.88	11	2.40	64	1.87	82	2.06	22	2.38	11	1.92
Well/Very well	42	2.65	41	2.66	23	2.87	22	2.59	42	2.58***	41	2.54***	23	2.74*	22	2.55**

*Ttest *p<0.05 **p<0.01 ***p<0.001 = Significantly higher*

Those highlighted in yellow remained significant after adjusting for other factors

Table A7. Paid job in previous 4 weeks by English proficiency 10-12 months after arrival

	Paid job=yes			
	CRISP	HSP1	CSP	HSP2
	N=106	N=123	N=46	N=33
English proficiency				
None/Not well	13%	7%	64%	9%
Well/Very well	40%**	17%	71%	18%

*Chi2 test *p<0.05 **p<0.01 ***p<0.001 = Significantly higher*

Those highlighted in yellow remained significant after adjusting for other factor

Table A8. Self-sufficiency by Digital literacy 10-12 months after arrival

	Self-sufficiency Index			
	CRISP	HSP1	CSP	HSP2
	Correlation coefficient N=106	Correlation coefficient N=123	Correlation coefficient N=44	Correlation coefficient N=33
Digital literacy	0.77***	0.72***	0.65**	0.75***

*Correlation *p<0.05 **p<0.01 ***p<0.001 = Significantly higher*

Those highlighted in yellow remained significant after adjusting for other factors

Table A9. Paid job in previous 4 weeks by Digital literacy 10-12 months after arrival

	Paid job							
	CRISP		HSP1		CSP		HSP2	
	No N=81	Yes N=25	No N=110	Yes N=13	No N=14	Yes N=31	No N=28	Yes N=5
Digital literacy	2.05	2.59**	2.13	2.61*	2.55	2.67	2.41	2.90

*Ttest *p<0.05 **p<0.01 ***p<0.001 = Significantly higher*

Table A10. Sense of belonging in the local community and Self-sufficiency by Psychological distress 10-12 months after arrival

	Sense of belonging in local community Index								Self-sufficiency Index							
	CRISP		HSP1		CSP		HSP2		CRISP		HSP11		CSP		HSP2	
	n	Mean	n	Mean	n	Mean	n	Mean	n	Mean	n	Mean	n	Mean	n	Mean
Psychological distress																
None	64	2.84**	58	2.74**	32	2.84	22	2.60	64	2.15	58	2.28	32	2.57	22	2.36
Probable moderate or serious	42	2.51	65	2.47	13	2.95	11	2.38	42	2.15	65	2.17	13	2.54	11	2.30

*Ttest *p<0.05 **p<0.01 ***p<0.001 = Significantly higher*

Those highlighted in yellow remained significant after adjusting for other factors

Table A11. Paid job in previous 4 weeks by Psychological distress 10-12 months after arrival

	Paid Job=yes			
	CRISP	HSP1	CSP	HSP2
	N=106	N=123	N=46	N=33
Psychological distress				
None	28%	14%	65%	18%
Probable moderate or serious	17%	8%	71%	9%

*Chi2 test *p<0.05 **p<0.01 ***p<0.001 = Significantly higher*

Those highlighted in yellow remained significant after adjusting for other factors

Table A12. Sense of belonging in local community and Self-sufficiency by Gender 10-12 months after arrival

	Sense of belonging in local community Index								Self-sufficiency Index							
	CRISP		HSP1		CSP		HSP2		CRISP		HSP1		CSP		HSP2	
	n	Mean	n	Mean	n	Mean	n	Mean	n	Mean	n	Mean	n	Mean	n	Mean
Gender																
Male	46	2.76	53	2.69	26	2.90	17	2.60	46	2.27	53	2.33*	27	2.67	17	2.58**
Female	59	2.67	70	2.53	19	2.84	16	2.45	59	2.06	70	2.13	18	2.39	16	2.09

*Ttest *p<0.05 **p<0.01 ***p<0.001 = Significantly higher*

Those highlighted in yellow remained significant after adjusting for other factors

Table A13. Paid job in previous 4 weeks by Gender 10-12 months after arrival

	Paid Job=yes			
	CRISP	HSP1	CSP	HSP2
	N=106	N=123	N=46	N=33
Gender				
Male	33%	19%**	96%*	29%*
Female	17%	4%	26%	0%

*Chi2 test *p<0.05 **p<0.01 ***p<0.001 = Significantly higher*

Those highlighted in yellow remained significant after adjusting for other factors

Note: Cells too small for CSP and HSP2

A2—Factors influencing CSGs' outcomes

Table A14. CSG Social connections—predictive factors

Social connections		
	n	Correlation coefficient
Group cohesion index	238	0.223***
Hours spent supporting refugee	237	0.156*
Age	238	-0.014
	n	Mean
Location		
Regional	69	0.50*
Major cities	169	0.42
Gender		
Male	65	0.50*
Female	171	0.43
CSG employment		
Not working	119	0.43
Working	110	0.46

*Chi2 test and Ttest *p<0.05 **p<0.01 ***p<0.001 = Significant*

Table A15. CSGs' understanding of the settlement landscape—predictive factors

CSGs' understanding of the settlement landscape Index		
	n	Mean
CSG prior experience		
No	183	2.66
Yes	50	2.30
Found providing support challenging		
No	55	2.11
Yes	178	2.32**
Gender		
Male	63	2.22
Female	168	2.30
CSG employment		
Not working	118	2.24
Working	106	2.31
	n	Correlation coefficient
Hours spent supporting refugee	232	0.074
Age	233	-0.126

*Chi2 test and Ttest *p<0.05 **p<0.01 ***p<0.001 = Significant*

Table A16. CSGs' understanding refugees' experiences and needs—predictive factors

CSGs' understanding refugees' experiences and needs index		
	n	**Mean**
CSG employment		
Not working	119	246
Working	108	2.60*
Found providing support challenging		
No	56	2.36
Yes	180	2.58**
Our group avoided providing conflicting information to the refugee household		
No	27	2.31
Yes	208	2.56**
	n	**Correlation coefficient**
Group cohesion	236	0.151*

*Chi2 test and Ttest *p<0.05 **p<0.01 ***p<0.001 = Significant*

Table A17. CSGs' understanding and valuing refugees' contributions and culture—predictive factors

CSGs' understanding and valuing refugees' contributions and culture		
	n	**Mean**
Gender		
Male	65	2.40
Female	171	2.39
CSG employment		
Not working	119	2.39
Working	110	2.42
Location		
Regional	69	2.42
Major cities	169	2.32
Unable to support refugee due to language barriers		
No	196	2.21
Yes	41	2.43*
	n	**Correlation coefficient**
Hours of support	237	0.004
Age	238	0.011

*Chi2 test and Ttest *p<0.05 **p<0.01 ***p<0.001 = Significant*

Table A18. Positive influence on how community treats refugees and Social connections

CSG made friends in the community through the activities they had undertaken to support the refugee household		
	No	**Yes**
Our group had a positive influence on the way others in their community treat refugees		
No	68 (49%)	25 (25%)
Yes	70 (51%)	75 (75%)***

*Chi2 test *p<0.05 **p<0.01 ***p<0.001 = Significant*

Table A19. Feeling fulfilled—predictive factors

Fulfilment		
	n	**Correlation coefficient**
Group cohesion	238	0.327***
Social connections	238	0.325***
Age	238	-0.003
Hours of support	237	-0.064
	n	**Mean**
Location		
Regional	69	4.62
Major cities	169	4.75
Found support role 'Draining'		
No	129	4.77**
Yes	108	4.52
Found support role 'Challenging'		
No	56	4.67
Yes	182	4.65
Lack clarity about needs of the refugee household		
No	221	4.69**
Yes	16	4.17
Our group provided conflicting advice to the refugee household		
No	209	4.72***
Yes	27	4.11
Our group is unable to support refugee due to language barriers		
No	196	4.72***
Yes	41	4.34
Our group had the skills and experience to support the refugee household were significantly more likely to find the experience fulfilling.		
No	38	4.28
Yes	199	4.72***
Group experienced challenges due to a lack of skills or knowledge to support the refugee household within their group		
No	221	4.69
Yes	16	4.17

*Chi2 test and Ttest *p<0.05 **p<0.01 ***p<0.001 = Significant*

A3—Factors influencing CSGs' willingness to re-sponsor

Table A20. Willingness to re-sponsor

	Considering re-sponsor	Not considering re-sponsor
	n=114 (48.5%)	n=121 (51.5%)
	Mean	Mean
Group cohesion	4.4***	3.98
Self-efficacy	4.22***	3.92
	n (%)	n (%)
Found providing support challenging		
Yes	74 (41.4%)	106 (58.9%)***
No	40 (72.7%)	15 (27.3%)
Found providing support draining		
Yes	41(38%)	67 (62%)**
No	73 (58%)	53 (42%)
Made friends with members of other CSGs		
Yes	32 (72.7%)***	12 (27.3%)
No	82 (42.9%)	109 (57.1%)
Made friends with refugee household		
Yes	96 (53.9%) ***	82 (46.1%)
No	18 (31.6%)	39 (68.4%)
Our group made a difference to the settlement of refugee households		
Yes	110 (50.5%)*	108 (49.5%)
No	4 (23.5%)	13 (76.5%)
Our group had a positive influence on the way others in our community treat refugees		
Yes	87 (60.8%)***	56 (39.2%)
No	27 (29.4%)	65 (70.6%)
Our group provided conflicting advice to the refugee household		
Yes	6 (23.1%)	20 (76.9%)***
No	108 (51.9%)	100 (48.1%)
Our group wasn't able to help the refugee household at times due to language barriers		
Yes	9 (22.5%)	31 (77.5%)***
No	105 (53.9%)	90 (46.1%)
The refugee household was too dependent on our group		
Yes	17 (26.6%)	47 (73.4%)***
No	97 (56.7%)	74 (43.3)
The refugee household had unrealistic expectations about what supports our group could do/provide		
Yes	23 (29.1%)	56 (70.9%)***
No	91 (58.3%)	65 (41.7%)

*Chi2 test and Ttest *p<0.05 **p<0.01 ***p<0.001 = Significant*

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