



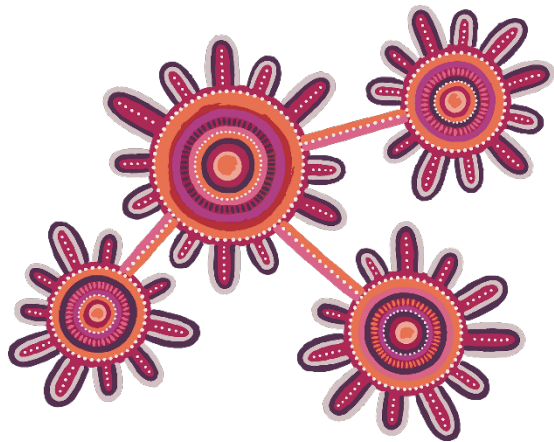
Employment Transitions among Humanitarian Migrants: *Evidence from a Decade of BNLA data*

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Acknowledgement of Country



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**Building a
New Life
in Australia**

The Longitudinal Study
of Humanitarian Migrants

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Overview



- Research context
- Rationale and objectives
- Data and sample
- Approach
- Results and implications

Research context



- Humanitarian migrants (offshore visa holders) are eligible for social security support as soon as they arrive in Australia, and they receive support like other residents.
- Includes income support payments (e.g., unemployment benefits, youth allowance, family assistance) and other forms of assistance (e.g., rent assistance, Healthcare Concession card).
- Payments are available based on age or if individuals are affected by disability, caregiving responsibilities, or unemployment.
- Some humanitarian migrants who initially relied on government income support successfully transitioned from income support payments to employment.

Rationale and objectives



- Little longitudinal Australian evidence on how humanitarian migrants move from government income support into employment.

Our questions

- 1) What are the patterns of transition from government income support to employment over time?
 - 2) What factors influence that transition?
- Answering these identifies where policy and program interventions can lift economic integration.



Data: BNLA participants and analysis sample

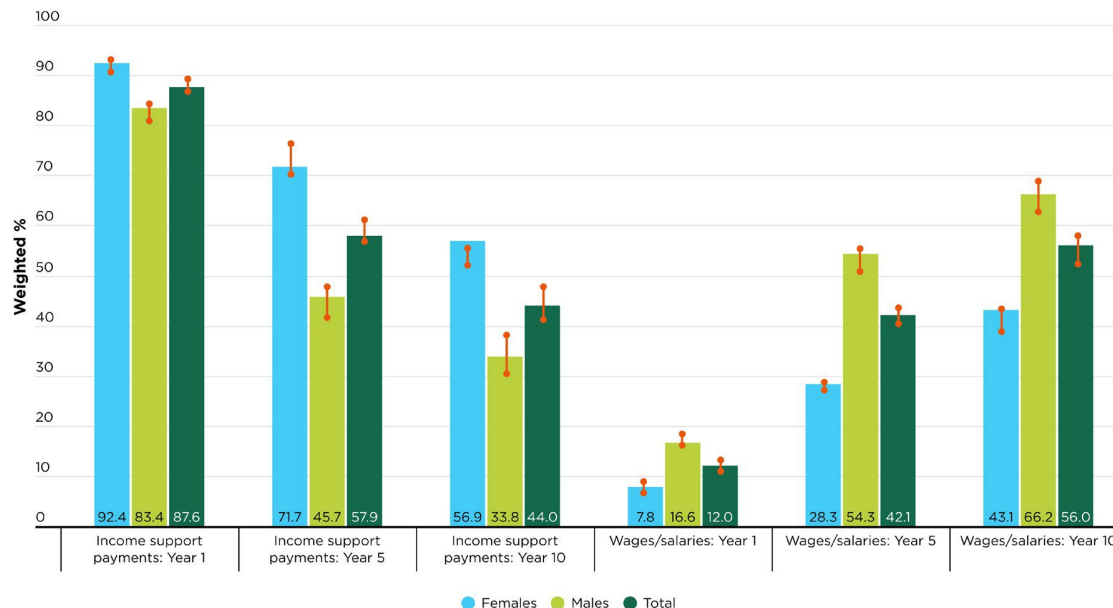


- BNLA follows ~ 2,400 humanitarian migrants aged 15 and above across 6 waves, 2013-14 to 2023.
- We use Waves 1, 5 and 6 — arrival, 5 years and 10 years.
- Includes participants aged 15-59 who reported their main income source:
 - Government income support
 - Wages/salaries & others
- **Analysis sample:** 2,182 at year 1 → 1,697 at year 5 → 973 at year 10.
- Government income support as main source fell across the same period: 89% → 62% → 49%.

Reliance on government income support falls as humanitarian migrants move into work over a decade — but women lag behind men throughout



Main income source over time by sex



Notes: BNLA participants aged 15–59 in Wave 1 and those also surveyed in Waves 5 and 6 (n = 2182, 1697, and 973). Cross-sectional weights were applied to BNLA data.

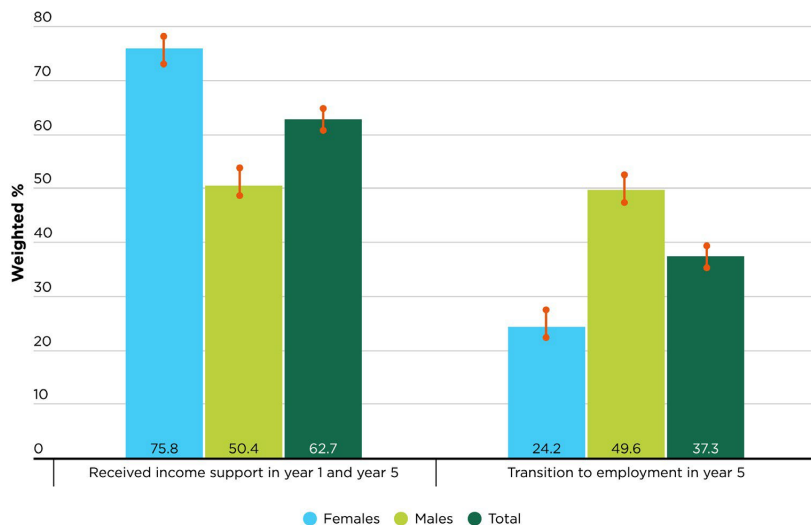
Sources: BNLA Wave 1 (Year 1 = 2013-14), Wave 5 (Year 5 = 2017-18), Wave 6 (Year 10 = 2023)

Research question 1 — patterns of transition over time

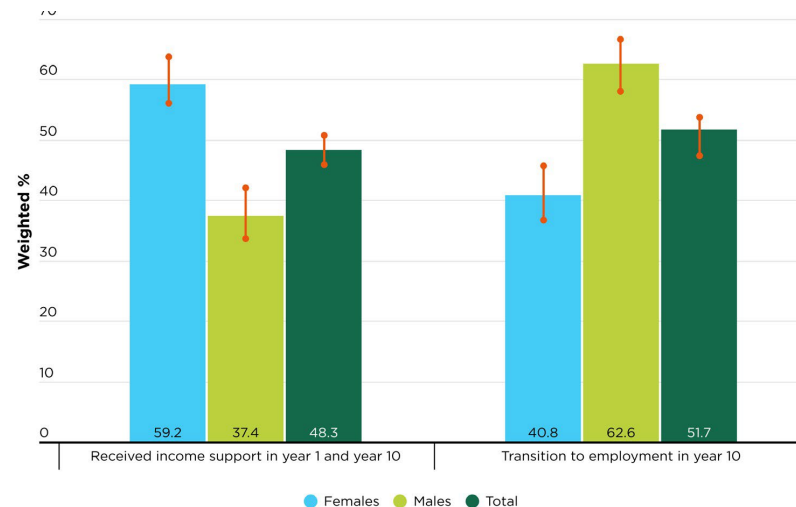
Men were more likely than women to transition to paid employment over time. While women's reliance on government income support persisted, it declined modestly by year 10.



Transition in the main income source between year 1 and year 5 by sex



Transition in the main income source between year 1 and year 10 by sex



Unadjusted proportions — not controlling for other factors.

Notes: BNLA participants aged 15–59 in Wave 1. Panel weights were applied to BNLA data.

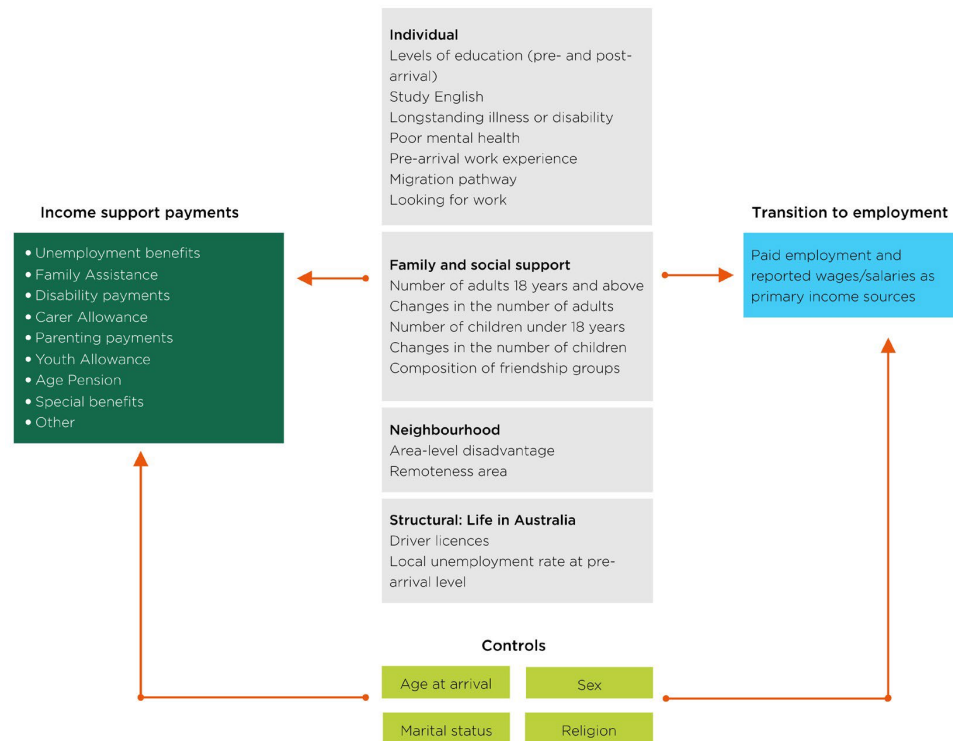
Sources: BNLA Wave 1 (Year 1 = 2013-14), Wave 5 (Year 5 = 2017-18), Wave 6 (Year 10 = 2023)

Research question 2 — what influences the transition

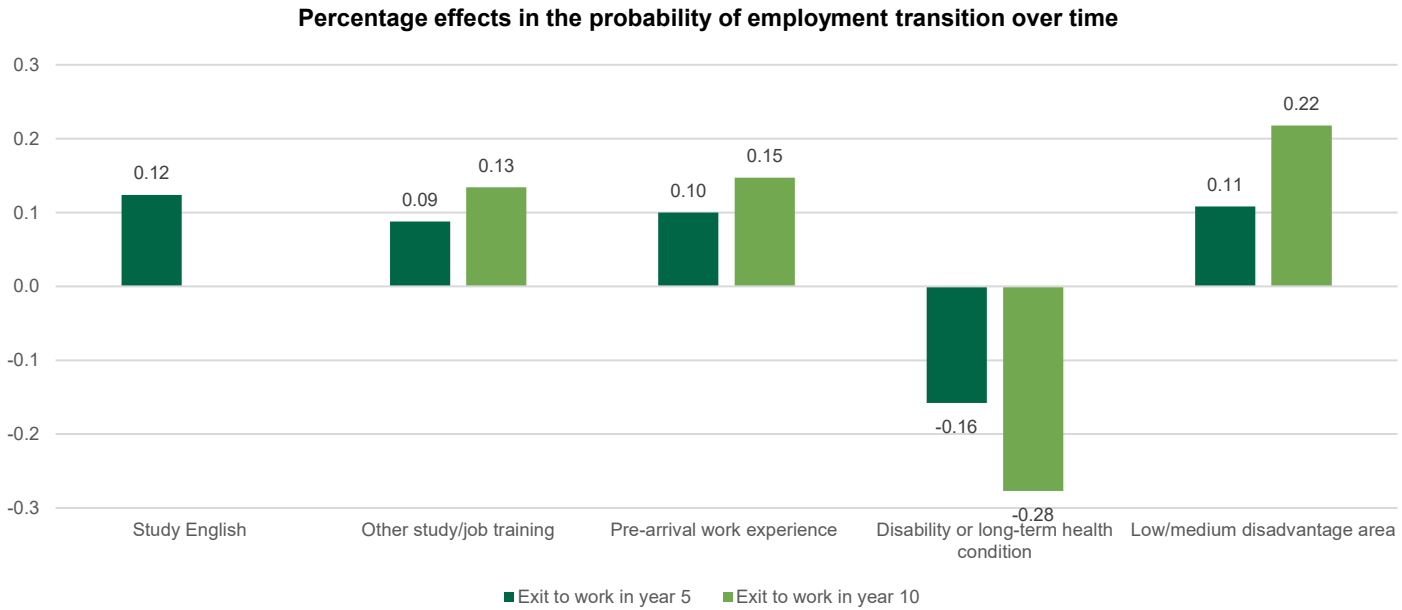
Multidimensional approach



- It models the transition to employment as a function of 4 factors
 - Individual characteristics
 - Contextual
 - Family and social support
 - Neighbourhood characteristics
 - Structural
- Payment type was collected at Wave 1 — so we model transitions out of any government income support.
- Unemployment benefits dominated Wave 1 — so the pooled measure still captures the main transition.



Which factors matter most when considered together? - English skills, education or training in Australia, and pre-arrival work experience supported employment transitions, though their effects varied over time. Living in less disadvantaged areas also increased the likelihood of transition to work, while disability remained a barrier.

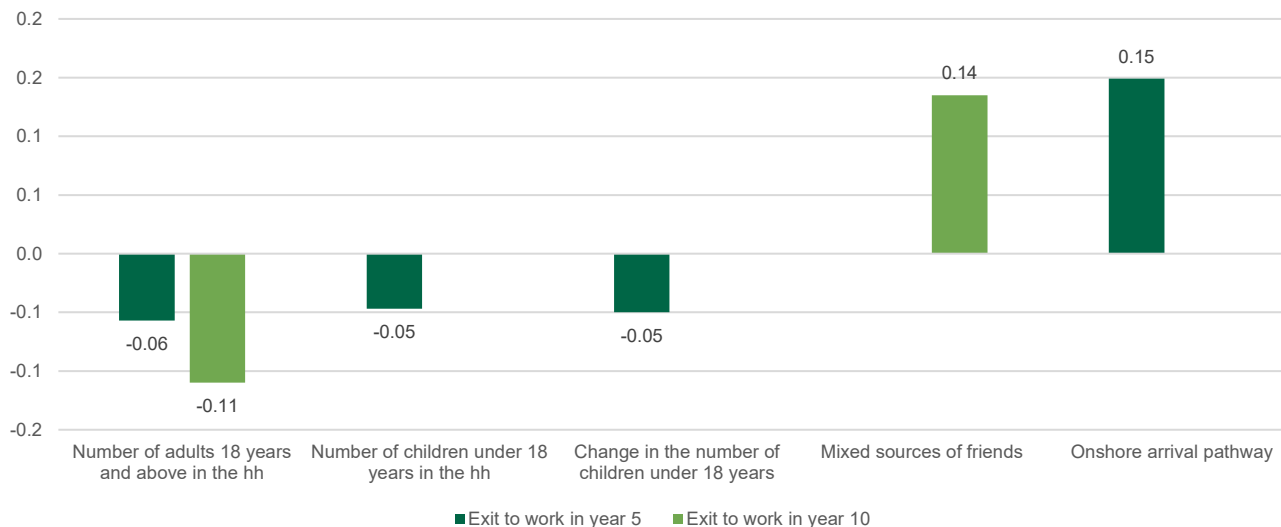


Notes: Marginal effects estimated from robust logistic regression models. Controlling for other variables in the conceptual framework. Limited to participants aged 15–59 in Wave 1.
Sources: BNLA Wave 1 (Year 1 = 2013-14), Wave 5 (Year 5 = 2017-18), Wave 6 (Year 10 = 2023)

Social networks facilitated transitions, particularly in year 10, whereas family structures tended to hinder them, especially in year 5. Arriving via onshore pathways was also relevant for employment transitions but only in year 5.



Percentage effects in the probability of employment transition over time



Notes: Marginal effects estimated from robust logistic regression models. Controlling for variables in the conceptual framework. Limited to participants aged 15–59 in Wave 1.

Sources: BNLA Wave 1 (Year 1 = 2013-14), Wave 5 (Year 5 = 2017-18), Wave 6 (Year 10 = 2023)

Implications: address employment barriers for humanitarian migrants with disabilities or long-term health conditions



- **Strengthen employment policies** that respond to the needs of people with disabilities.
- Little improvement even after 10 years—design for **ongoing assistance**: workplace accommodations, health-linked pathways, supported transitions.
- **Track employment trajectories** beyond initial settlement to see where gaps persist.
- **Disability compounds gender gaps by year 10** — support must respond to both.



Implications: English study alone may not be sufficient for long-term labour market integration, particularly for women



- **Short-term gains** from English study fade; **long-term employment success** requires **additional skills and experience** — the same pattern for men and women.
- **Early study or job training** pays off long-term—but not for women, so intervene early to address structural barriers.
- **Recognise the role of social networks**, even though **the evidence is limited for women**—invest in peer mentoring and culturally responsive networking.

Implications: household composition shapes employment transition over time



- Employment support should account for **household dynamics**—caring roles in larger adult households and children under 18 constrain job-seeking — the same pattern for men and women.
- Tailor support: **individualised employment plans, flexible scheduling, access to respite services.**
- For newly arrived families: **affordable childcare and family-friendly** pathways into work.





Q&A