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Refugee women and work: Evidence from an Australian longitudinal study

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Abstract

Obtaining employment is a high priority for people with refugee backgrounds in countries of resettlement and an important aspect of integration. There are a range of barriers to gaining work for new arrivals; however, much of the existing quantitative evidence on characteristics of employment and facilitators and barriers to work faced by refugees does not consider gender or focuses primarily on men. We used a large, longitudinal survey of over 2000 refugees to Australia to identify characteristics of employment for refugee women and factors associated with the likelihood of employment. Refugee women had lower rates of employment compared with pre-migration and were concentrated in lower-skilled occupations. There were gender differences in predictors of employment outcomes and English language proficiency, living outside major cities and self-assessed health were all significant determinants of employment for refugee women. The findings highlight the need for specifically considering the employment trajectories of refugee women and the importance of a gender-informed employment strategy for new arrivals.

INTRODUCTION

The global refu gee population reached 25.9 million by the end of 2018 (Refugee Council of Australia, 2020). Over the past 10 years, Australia has resettled more than 180,000 refugees (Refugee Council of Australia, 2020). Upon resettlement in a new host country, people from refugee backgrounds (hereafter 'refugees') face issues such as dealing with pre-migration trauma, acculturation stress, lack of education opportunities, difficulties securing housing, language barriers, racism and discrimination (Fozdar & Hartley, 2013; Fozdar & Torezani, 2008; Li et al., 2016; Lindencrona et al., 2008). These challenges include securing appropriate employment. Employment is a key aspect of integration into a new society and culture, has a pervasive impact on identity, contributes towards financial stability for families and can have a significant impact on health and wellbeing (Lai et al., 2022; Ziersch et al., 2023). Research on refugee populations has highlighted that finding employment is considered a top priority upon resettlement (Fozdar & Torezani, 2008).

Refugee women are often particularly vulnerable pre-, during and post-migration due to gender-based discrimination in their home countries (Rizkalla & Segal, 2020), lack of access to education (Alvi-Aziz, 2008; Rizkalla et al., 2020), as well as violence across their refugee journeys (Triggs, 2016). After resettlement, refugee women can face additional challenges such as a lack of education, literacy in their primary language, childcare responsibilities and lack of formal skills; which make it challenging to enter the workforce (Alvi-Aziz, 2008; Fozdar & Hartley, 2013). There has been significant research on people from refugee backgrounds and employment in general (Fozdar & Torezani, 2008; Lai et al., 2022), but there has not been a detailed quantitative assessment focused on women's experiences and gender differences in employment outcomes and predictors. Due et al. (2021) provide some descriptive quantitative analysis but this is limited to a brief report on employment rates for refugee women, non-recognition of pre-migration qualifications and commonly reported reasons for difficulties in obtaining a job. Many previous quantitative analyses of refugees and employment in Australia have either not disaggregated data by sex or have focused on refugee men due to the number of observations on refugee women in paid employment being too small for meaningful analysis (Cheng, Wang, Jiang, et al., 2021; Cheng, Wang, & Taksa, 2021; Delaporte & Piracha, 2018). International studies that did disaggregate by sex either had too small a sample to analyse employment integration separate from integration into education and training (Cheung & Phillimore, 2017) or focused on how gender differences in the composition of human capital, language proficiency, family structure and networks contributed to the size of the gender employment gap (Kosyakova et al., 2023; Salikutluk & Menke, 2021) rather than examining specific facilitators of employment for refugee women and how this might differ compared with refugee men.

The main objective of this paper is to address this gap in the literature by providing quantitative evidence on characteristics of employment for refugee women in Australia, factors associated with employment outcomes and to determine any differences in barriers and facilitators of employment for refugee women compared with refugee men. This study adds to the literature on refugees and employment in multiple ways. The research involved analysis of secondary data from a large survey of refugees to Australia, the Building a New Life in Australia (BNLA) study, which collects data on a wide range of variables related to employment, has a large enough sample to allow analysis of employment characteristics and facilitators and barriers to employment disaggregated by sex and includes data on five waves which allows analysis of experiences, challenges and changes in outcomes over time.

The rest of the paper is structured as follows. Section 2 provides background and additional context on Australia's migration programme and the Australian labour market, integration challenges for refugees and what is known about refugees and employment, including a review of relevant literature. Section 3 focuses on methods with details on the setting, an introduction to the data used, our hypothesis and underlying theory and analytical strategy. Section 4 presents the results, finding that characteristics of employment for refugee women differ in important ways compared with refugee men. The discussion section in Section 5 sets out how our study contributes to what is already known and the policy and practice implications of the results. Section 6 concludes with recommendations and suggestions for future research.

BACKGROUND AND ADDITIONAL CONTEXT

According to the UNHCR (UNHCR, 2020), a refugee is defined as a person who has been forced to flee their country due to war, persecution or violence. Australia's migration program involves two programs for permanent migrants. The Migration Program includes skilled migrants and family migrants. The Refugee and Humanitarian Program is for those seeking humanitarian protection. The Australian Government allocates a quota for people migrating to Australia under one of these two programs. Australia's humanitarian program has an onshore program and an offshore program. The onshore program is for refugees making a claim for asylum after they arrive in Australia while the offshore program settles refugees who are in another country before they come to Australia. The number of places in the Humanitarian Program was reduced from 20,000 to 13,750 in late 2013 and increased to 18,750 in 2018–2019 (Asylum Insight, 2018).

The Refugee and Humanitarian Program includes the following visas which are specifically available for refugees and grant them permanent residency: Refugee visa (subclass 200), In-Country Special Humanitarian visa (subclass 201), Emergency Rescue (subclass 203) and Woman at Risk visa (subclass 204) (Department of Home Affairs, 2024). The Refugee visa is for people who have been referred to Australia for resettlement by the UNHCR. The In-Country Special Humanitarian visa applies to those who still live in their home country and have not been able to leave. The Emergency Rescue visa is for people referred to Australia by the UNHCR due to being in immediate danger. Lastly, the Woman at Risk visa is for women who are in danger of victimization who do not have the protection of a partner or a relative (Department of Home Affairs, 2024). There are also a range of visas in the onshore programme including Bridging visa E (subclass 050) which allows applicants to remain in Australia while their immigration matter is being finalized or while awaiting an immigration decision. There is also the Save Haven Enterprise visa which enables non-citizens to live in Australia temporarily (for 5 years) and is suitable for those who entered Australia without a visa and seek asylum.

Employment outcomes differ by migration programme and visa type. Migrants entering Australia on a skilled, typically employer-sponsored visa have very high labour force participation rates and high rates of employment, well above 90 per cent and higher than employment rates for the Australian-born population (Australian Government National Skills Commission, 2021). Employment rates for refugees have been found to be much lower than other migrants to Australia (Brell et al., 2020) and there is some evidence that refugee women have much lower employment rates than refugee men (Due et al., 2021; Syed & Murray, 2009). International research also mirrors this trend (Bevelander & Lundh, 2007). The BNLA database draws specifically on data from humanitarian migrants, as opposed to asylum seekers and other migrants. Humanitarian migrants in Australia are granted permanent protection visas, are entitled to access to education and universal health care and are eligible for government support through the Refugee and Humanitarian Program (Department of Home Affairs, 2019). Humanitarian migrants also have an entitlement to work.

Refugee women face integration challenges that differ from those experienced by refugee men including poorer health, lower education, higher gender inequality and low employment of women in their home countries (Liebig & Tronstad, 2018). Employment has been identified as a core domain of integration (Ager & Strang, 2008) and the inability to gain employment can have negative effects on refugees. Several authors have highlighted the impact of unemployment on the wellbeing of refugees in general upon resettlement (Colic-Peisker & Tilbury, 2007a; Correa-Velez et al., 2015; Fozdar & Torezani, 2008; Ziersch et al., 2023). Ozturk et al. (2019) identified that being unable to work can add to the sense of loneliness and deteriorating self-esteem for refugees. Employment also affects other elements of the resettlement and integration process, such as access to adequate and secure housing (Bakker et al., 2016; Fozdar & Hartley, 2013; Li et al., 2016). In contrast, studies have found that secure employment and meaningful work provide benefits for both general populations and refugees specifically, including independence, increases in family finances, provision for children and family members, greater social inclusion, social capital and self-efficacy (Bevelander & Lundh, 2007; Correa-Velez et al., 2015).

The Australian labour market is highly gender-segregated by industry and occupation, consistent with patterns of gender segregation in the OECD and there has been little change in this segregation in the past three decades (Lind & Colquhoun, 2021). The association of female-dominated occupations as women's work has resulted in this work being undervalued, with lower wages and lower job quality (Pennington & Stanford, 2020). Refugees are further concentrated into labour market niches or labour segmentation, experiencing loss of occupational status with allocation to low-status and low-paid jobs (Colic-Peisker & Tilbury, 2006). The combination of gender segregation and a segmented labour market can compound these effects for refugee women.

Previous Australian research suggests that refugees often move between precarious jobs and informal work (Ziersch et al., 2021). Little is known about informal work, with data limited to estimates of the size of the informal economy in Australia which suggests the informal economy in Australia is smaller than in many other countries (Vandenberg, 2020). The focus of this paper is on formal employment, but we acknowledge that refugees may transition between informal employment and formal employment.

Refugees resettled in host countries face many barriers to gaining employment (Cheng, Wang, Jiang, et al., 2021; Cheng, Wang, & Taksa, 2021; Colic-Peisker & Tilbury, 2007a; Delaporte & Piracha, 2018). Much of the literature identifying these barriers to gaining employment does not disaggregate by sex or focuses primarily on refugee men, including the three existing quantitative studies that examine the Australian context (Cheng, Wang, Jiang, et al., 2021; Cheng, Wang, & Taksa, 2021; Delaporte & Piracha, 2018).

Studies that did disaggregate by sex, both undertaken in Germany, found that having young children decreased refugee women's labour force participation, refugee women had lower educational attainment, a smaller proportion of refugee women had completed language courses, fewer had labour market experience and refugee women had lower German skills, more health issues and had more limited contacts beyond family networks compared with refugee men (Kosyakova et al., 2023: Salikutluk & Menke, 2021). Refugee women in Germany were found to benefit less from completing a qualification compared with men (Salikutluk & Menke, 2021). These studies focused on compositional factors associated with the gap in employment rates of refugee women compared with refugee men and found the low employment rate for refugee women increased at a lower pace compared with employment rates for refugee men, resulting in a widening employment gap over time (Kosyakova et al., 2023). This paper examines different characteristics of employment than those examined in these studies and our focus is on how facilitators and barriers to obtaining employment in Australia differ between refugee women and men.

The small body of qualitative literature on refugee women focuses on select characteristics of and barriers to, employment. For example, compared to refugee men, refugee women are typically underemployed and face additional barriers in gaining employment including learning English or gaining qualifications (Due et al., 2021; Feeney, 2000; Lindencrona et al., 2008). Additionally, research points to cultural and country of origin differences in employment rates for refugee women which have been attributed to higher levels of education and higher English competence and confidence within specific groups or social factors in resettlement countries, such as levels of discriminatory attitudes held by the general population towards specific cultural groups (e.g., Muslim women) (Bevelander & Lundh, 2007; Colic-Peisker & Tilbury, 2007b; Syed & Murray, 2009). The likelihood of integration for women from refugee and migrant backgrounds into the labour force is impacted by views held in their home countries, particularly if employment for women is viewed as unfavourable in their home countries (Feeney, 2000; Triggs, 2016).

Given the difference in integration challenges for refugees by sex and the gender segregation in the labour markets of OECD countries including Australia, there is a strong case for a detailed quantitative analysis of characteristics of employment for refugees in Australia and barriers and facilitators to employment disaggregated by sex.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Setting

The Australian labour market has less secure employment compared with most OECD countries. The OECD Employment Outlook found that Australia has the second highest rate of part-time employment of all OECD countries (OECD, 2023), the fourth highest rate of short part-time employment and job stability has decreased in Australia (OECD, 2019). Refugees arriving through the Refugee and Humanitarian program are provided with support to secure employment as part of their settlement support program. The exact nature of these supports includes more intensive targeted supports including English language programmes in the first year or so, with an expected transition to mainstream government employment supports for work readiness and more ad hoc specialized supports generally up to 5 years (Due et al., 2021).

Data

We conducted a secondary analysis of data from the BNLA project. The BNLA project conducted five waves of interviews to produce a longitudinal dataset that enables the examination of resettlement outcomes for humanitarian migrants who settled in Australia between May and December 2013 (Edwards et al., 2018). Wave 1 data was collected between October 2013 and March 2014, Wave 2 between October 2014 and February 2015, Wave 3 between October 2015 and February 2016, Wave 4 between October 2016 and February 2017 and Wave 5 between October 2017 and March 2018. Response rates in each wave were high: 82.7 per cent for Wave 1, 87 per cent in Wave 2, 79 per cent in Wave 3, 80 per cent in Wave 4 and 78 per cent in Wave 5 (Australian Government Department of Social Services and Australian Institute of Family Studies, 2019).

The BNLA project is a nationally representative cohort study. BNLA collected information from people who received a humanitarian migrant visa overseas and arrived in Australia between May and December 2013 (offshore refugees) and people who sought asylum after their arrival in Australia and were granted a humanitarian visa between May and December 2013 (onshore refugees). The study set sample parameters of 77 per cent offshore refugee participants and 23 per cent onshore refugee participants as this ratio followed the offshore–onshore distribution of humanitarian visas in 2013 (Australian Government Department of Social Services and Australian Institute of Family Studies, 2019; Edwards et al., 2018). The BNLA is the largest survey of Australian humanitarian migrants and is one of the largest studies of its kind internationally (Edwards et al., 2018). The study cohort was comprised of participants from 35 countries and aged from 18 to 80, resulting in an extremely diverse cohort (Edwards et al., 2018). It was commissioned by the Department of Social Services and is managed by the Australian Institute for Family Studies.

The BNLA project collected data on a broad range of topics. The scope of the employment and income topic covers many characteristics of employment. The topics included in the BNLA provide coverage of factors identified in Ager and Strang's influential conceptual framework defining core domains and facilitators of integration (Ager & Strang, 2008). The BNLA is therefore well suited for conducting a detailed examination of the labour market integration of refugee women.

We obtained permission to use de-identified data from BNLA release 5.0 via the Australian Data Archive Dataverse (https://dataverse.ada.edu.au/dataverse/ada). This study involved secondary analysis of existing data that was de-identified therefore ethical approval was not required. BNLA sample size by survey wave and sex is presented in Table 1. This study uses data from Waves 1 and 5 to examine descriptive characteristics of employment for refugee women in Australia. Analysis of Wave 1 data alongside data from later waves provides comparisons of settlement processes and outcomes shortly after settling in Australia with outcomes after additional years living in Australia. Waves 4 and 5 are analysed in subsequent multivariate analyses of factors associated with

TABLE 1 Sample size by sex and survey wave for each wave of the BNLA.

	Women	Men	Total
Wave 1	1092	1307	2399
Wave 2	896	1113	2009
Wave 3	888	1006	1894
Wave 4	897	1032	1929
Wave 5	886	995	1881

the likelihood of employment. Multivariate analysis uses Waves 4 and 5 because employment rates for refugee women are too low in Waves 1–3 to allow meaningful analysis of factors associated with a higher or lower likelihood of employment for refugee women.

Hypothesis and analysis

Our hypothesis for this research was that characteristics of employment and factors associated with a higher or lower likelihood of employment differ for refugee women compared with refugee men. Analysis in this study contributes empirically to the literature by conducting descriptive analysis of variables not commonly analysed and using data for these descriptive analyses that exploits observations on the same sample for pre-migration information, experiences at Wave 1 not long after settlement and at Wave 5 after four more years. Our analysis commenced by conducting descriptive analyses to map employment characteristics. We then conducted multivariate analyses to further investigate factors associated with the likelihood of employment for refugees in Australia. The multivariate model used Waves 4 and 5 of the BNLA where there were higher numbers of refugee women employed. This is an advantage of the BNLA data as many other papers have not been able to quantitatively conduct models disaggregated by sex as there were insufficient observations on refugee women in paid work to do so.

Variables for multivariate analysis

The outcome variable was responses to the question 'Are you currently in paid work?' This variable has a value of 1 if a respondent reported that they did paid work in a job, business or farm in the preceding 7 days and has a value of 0 if they were not currently in paid work. This question was included in each wave and had a low rate of missing values (approximately 1% of values).

Explanatory variables in the regression model were variables capturing demographic characteristics, health, human capital, characteristics of migration experience and other factors expected to be associated with the likelihood of employment. The selection of explanatory variables was guided by Ager and Strang's conceptual model of core domains of integration, which points to the importance of education, health, social connections and language for integration for refugees (Ager & Strang, 2008). The core domains of integration also align with labour economic theory which emphasizes the relationship between human capital characteristics and likelihood of employment (Delaporte & Piracha, 2018). The selection of explanatory variables was also informed by barriers and enablers to paid work identified in descriptive analysis. Definitions of explanatory variables and information on variable construction are presented in Table 2.

Index of Relative Socioeconomic Advantage and Disadvantage (IRSAD) decile of the area of residence captures the socio-economic status of the area refugees settled in which may reflect the availability of local employment opportunities. An explanatory variable was included for the survey wave in recognition that employment

TABLE 2 Explanatory variables included in the model of factors associated with paid employment.

Variable	Definition and variable construction
Wave	Survey wave: has value of each wave
Age	Respondent's age: categorical variable
Married/partnered	1 if married/partnered, 0 otherwise
Region of birth	SACC 2011 minor region of birth: categorical variable
Location	1 if lived in major cities, 0 if lived in inner or outer regional Australia
IRSAD	Decile of the index of relative socio-economic advantage and disadvantage of the area of residence with values from 1 (highest disadvantage) to 10 (lowest)
Migration path	1 if onshore, 0 if offshore
Employed pre-migration	1 if did paid work in a job, business or farm prior to arriving in Australia, 0 otherwise
Oral language proficiency	Summed score of 2 items: understanding and speaking proficiency with values from 2 (worst) to 8 (best)
Fair/poor self-assessed health	1 if very poor, poor or fair, 0 if good, very good or excellent
Probable serious mental illness	1 if Kessler score of 19 and above, 0 otherwise
PTSD	1 if the PTSD-8 scale indicates PTSD, 0 otherwise
Lived with close family in Wave 1[a]	1 if lived with a partner, children or other immediate family, 0 otherwise
Pre-migration education	Pre-migration educational attainment: categorical variable
Study or job training	1 if has undertaken study or job training since arriving in Australia, 0 otherwise
Community support	Summed score from 3 items with values from 3 (no support) to 9
Traumatic experiences pre-arrival	Number of traumatic experiences pre-migration
Spent time in refugee camps	1 if spent time in refugee camps prior to arriving in Australia, 0 otherwise

Abbreviations: IRSAD, Index of Relative Socio-economic Advantage and Disadvantage; PTSD, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder; SACC, Standard Australian Classification of Countries.

[a]Variable only included in Waves 1 and 2.

rates increased over time for refugee men and for refugee women, including between Waves 4 and 5. The oral English language proficiency variable was creating by adding the scores for two oral English language proficiency items in the BNLA: understanding English and speaking English. The community support variable was created by adding the scores for three community support items: support from the national or ethnic community, support from the religious community and support from other community groups. Internal consistency for oral English language proficiency and community support was 0.93 and 0.85, respectively.

Cases with missing data for at least one of the explanatory variables were not included in multivariate analyses. Missing data biases result if the probability of missingness is associated with the dependent variable. We created missing data indicator variables for all explanatory variables included in our multivariate analysis. These missing data indicator variables were used to determine whether there was a significant association between missingness and whether respondents were in paid work for any explanatory variables. There was a significant association between the probability of missingness and paid work for the PTSD variable, but no significant association between missingness and paid work for all other explanatory variables.

Analytical strategy for multivariate modelling

The analysis included descriptive analysis in preparation for multivariate analysis and generalized linear mixed modelling (GLMM) with the logit link. Analysis was conducted using Stata version 14.2. The descriptive analysis stage involved analysing the distribution of the outcome variable and explanatory variables by examining means, standard errors and frequencies. Correlation coefficients were analysed for explanatory variables to identify any multicollinearity and the variance inflation factor was also assessed between all variables. Bivariate correlations were examined between the outcome variable and each explanatory variable and univariate logistic regressions were conducted to assess associations.

Multivariate GLMM was chosen for analysing the multivariate model because GLMM accommodates nonlinear models, handles a wide variety of distributions for the dependent variable and can account for the correlation between repeated measures in longitudinal data (McCulloch & Neuhaus, 2015). GLMM was used to conduct multivariate analysis in Stata via the meglm command. Models were estimated for the unbalanced sample for Waves 4 and 5 which retained observations for respondents who did not participate in every wave. Models were run separately by sex to enable comparison and identification of differences between factors that were barriers and enablers for employment for refugee women and those associated with the likelihood of employment for refugee men. The model-building process involved adding each variable one at a time and assessing model fit via log-likelihood, Akaike's information criteria and conducting Hosmer–Lemeshow goodness-of-fit tests on the final model specifications. Stata link tests were conducted to identify any specification errors. Estimates were expressed as Odds Ratios (ORs) to simplify interpretation.

RESULTS

Demographic and employment statistics for Wave 1 are reported in Table 3. Most refugees settling in Australia arrived through the offshore migration pathway (77% of refugee men in Wave 1, 93% of refugee women) and almost 92 per cent of refugee men, 89 per cent of refugee women lived in major cities. Employment rates in Wave 1 were very low, only 10 per cent for refugee men and 1 per cent for refugee women and much lower than pre-migration employment rates of 73 per cent and 31 per cent for refugee men and women respectively. Refugee women had higher rates of poor health outcomes compared with refugee men for self-rated general health, serious mental illness and PTSD. More than half were born in the Middle-East and 18 per cent of refugee men and 14 per cent of refugee women held a post-school qualification when they settled in Australia.

Characteristics of employment for refugee women

This section begins by comparing pre-migration employment characteristics with outcomes in Wave 5 where the larger numbers of both refugee men and women in employment provide a clearer picture of the distribution of employment. Employment rates in the BNLA increased after an additional 4 years of living in Australia and were 46 per cent for refugee men in Wave 5 and 12.5 per cent for refugee women but remain lower than pre-migration employment rates of 72.5 per cent for refugee men and 30.4 per cent for refugee women. Table 4 presents transitions in employment status comparing employment status before migration and in Wave 5 of the BNLA for refugee men and women. For refugee women, only 23 per cent of those who were in paid work before migration were also employed in Wave 5, while 8.2 per cent of refugee women who were not employed before migration had obtained employment in Wave 5. Almost half (48.9%) of refugee men who were in paid work before migration were in paid work in Wave 5 and 38.5 per cent of refugee men who did not work before migration were in paid work in Wave 5.

TABLE 3 Descriptive statistics for Wave 1 BNLA sample.

	Men		Women	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Aged under 25	0.272	0.445	0.304	0.46
Aged 26–35	0.286	0.452	0.256	0.437
Aged 36–45	0.211	0.408	0.215	0.411
Aged 46–55	0.135	0.341	0.119	0.324
Aged 56–65	0.062	0.241	0.076	0.265
Aged over 65 years	0.034	0.18	0.029	0.169
Never attended school	0.129	0.336	0.196	0.397
6 or less years of school	0.206	0.405	0.191	0.393
7–12 years of school	0.486	0.5	0.47	0.499
Trade or technical qualification	0.068	0.252	0.051	0.219
University degree	0.111	0.314	0.092	0.289
Middle-East	0.502	0.5	0.565	0.496
Central Asia	0.272	0.445	0.236	0.425
South Asia	0.11	0.313	0.068	0.252
South-East Asia	0.053	0.224	0.063	0.242
Africa	0.063	0.243	0.069	0.254
Married or has partner	0.628	0.483	0.508	0.5
Lives in major cities	0.916	0.278	0.888	0.315
Migration pathway	0.23	0.421	0.072	0.259
IRSAD decile	2.829	2.358	2.868	2.344
In paid work pre-migration	0.731	0.444	0.306	0.461
In paid work current wave	0.103	0.304	0.011	0.105
Fair or poor self-assessed health	0.303	0.46	0.445	0.497
Probable serious mental illness	0.127	0.333	0.221	0.415
PTSD	0.296	0.457	0.378	0.485

Abbreviations: IRSAD, Index of Relative Socio-economic Advantage and Disadvantage; PTSD, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder; SD, standard deviation.

The BNLA collects information on the main occupation before migration and the main occupation in Australia for those who were in paid work. Pre-migration, more than a quarter (25.3%) of refugee women in paid work were employed as professionals, 14.8 per cent were technicians/trades workers and 14.5 per cent were labourers (Table 5). The occupation with the largest pre-migration share for refugee men was technicians/trades workers (27.1%), followed by labourers (12.1%), professionals (11.1%) and machinery operators and drivers (9.6%).

Analysis of the main occupation reported in Wave 5 revealed a different pattern of employment by occupation compared with before migration (Table 5). For refugee women, the occupations with the largest shares of employment in Wave 5 were community and personal service workers (33.3%) and labourers (27.0%). Technicians/trades workers represented 9.0 per cent of employment for refugee women and 7.2 per cent were employed as professionals. Employment for refugee women was concentrated in lower-skilled occupations than was the case before migration and there was a decline in the percentage of women employed as professionals or technicians/trades workers post migration. For refugee men, the occupations with the largest shares of employment in Wave 5 were technicians/trades workers (36.4%), labourers (28.0%) and machinery operators and drivers (11.5%). There

TABLE 4 Transition in whether did paid work: Pre-arrival and Wave 5: By Gender, Percent.

	Wave 5: Currently in paid work			
Pre-arrival	**Men**		**Women**	
Did you do any paid work?	**Yes**	**No**	**Yes**	**No**
Yes	48.9	51.1	23.0	77.0
No	38.5	61.5	8.2	91.8
Total	46.1	53.9	12.7	87.3

Source: BNLA Waves 1 and 5.

were very few refugee men employed as managers and professionals in Wave 5 and this was not the case for refugee men before migration. Employment was concentrated in lower-skilled occupations (with the exception of men employed as technicians/trades workers), but not to the same extent as for refugee women.

The BNLA included a question asking whether participants would know how to look for a job if they had to. In Wave 1, there was a high degree of uncertainty about how to find a job with 68.0 per cent of refugee women and 41.5 per cent of refugee men reporting they would not know how to look for a job at all (Table 6). Knowledge of how to look for a job had improved by Wave 5, but 37.6 per cent of refugee women still reported they would not know how to look for a job at all (compared with 16.6% of men). Only 16.1 per cent of refugee women reported in Wave 5 that they would know very well how to look for a job.

BNLA participants who were currently working or ever looked for work were asked whether they had ever found it hard to get a job. In Wave 1, 90.1 per cent of refugee women and 91.9 per cent of refugee men reported they had found it hard to get a job and in Wave 5, 84.2 per cent of women and 77.2 per cent of men had found it hard to get a job. The most prevalent reasons cited for finding it hard to get a job in Waves 1 and 5 for refugee women and men were no Australian experience, English not good enough, no skills/qualifications and nothing in the same occupation as previous overseas employment (Table 7). In Wave 5, no suitable jobs were reported by a much larger proportion of refugee women and men compared with Wave 1.

Multivariate analysis

Multivariate analysis only uses Waves 4 and 5 where there were sufficient numbers of refugee women in paid work to enable meaningful analysis. The attrition rate in BNLA is lower than the attrition rate for other Australian longitudinal surveys. The re-interview rates were 84 per cent in Wave 2, 79 per cent in Wave 3, 80 per cent in Wave 4 and 78 per cent in Wave 5. Attrition at Wave 2 was found to be associated with lower pre-migration education, living in regional Australia and participants living in a couple family with no children (Edwards et al., 2018). Participants lost to follow-up were found to be otherwise similar to those retained in the study (Edwards et al., 2018).

Our analysis of differences between the characteristics in Wave 1 and Wave 4 related to attrition produced somewhat different findings to Edwards et al. (2018): a slightly larger proportion lived in major cities in Wave 4, the average IRSAD decile was slightly higher (indicating less socio-economic disadvantage) and a lower proportion arrived through the onshore migration pathway. The characteristics of the Wave 4 sample were otherwise similar to characteristics in Wave 1, including for pre-migration education, which limits the impact of attrition on findings. This indicates that the higher attrition associated with lower pre-migration education level found at Wave 2 did not persist in later waves of data collection.

About 45 per cent of refugee women and refugee men had undertaken study or job training since arriving in Australia. Mean oral language proficiency was 4.66 for refugee women and 5.08 for refugee men (scores ranged

TABLE 5 Main occupation before migration and in Wave 5.

	Pre-arrival				Wave 5			
	Men		Women		Men		Women	
Main occupation	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Managers	77	8.1	21	6.3	4	0.9	1	0.9
Professionals	105	11.1	84	25.3	10	2.2	8	7.2
Technicians/trades workers	257	27.1	49	14.8	165	36.4	10	9.0
Community and personal service workers	42	4.4	30	9.0	35	7.7	37	33.3
Clerical and administrative workers	22	2.3	15	4.5	5	1.1	4	3.6
Sales workers	43	4.5	11	3.3	17	3.8	7	6.3
Machinery operators and drivers	91	9.6	10	3.0	52	11.5	2	1.8
Labourers	115	12.1	48	14.5	127	28.0	30	27.0
Unassigned	40	4.2	13	3.9				
Don't know/missing	156	16.5	51	15.4	38	8.4	12	10.8
Total	948	100.0	332	100.0	453	100.0	111	100.0

Source: BNLA Waves 1 and 5.

TABLE 6 If you had to, would you know how to look for a job?

	Wave 1				Wave 5			
	Men		Women		Men		Women	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Would know very well	137	10.5	32	2.9	330	33.2	143	16.1
Would know fairly well	208	15.9	73	6.7	262	26.3	169	19.1
Would know a little	371	28.4	212	19.4	230	23.1	232	26.2
Wouldn't know at all	542	41.5	742	68.0	165	16.6	333	37.6
Don't know/ missing	49	3.7	33	3.0	8	0.8	9	1.0
Total	1307	100.0	1092	100.0	995	100.0	886	100.0

Source: BNLA Waves 1 and 5.

TABLE 7 Reasons respondents found it hard to get a job (if ever found it hard to get a job).

	Wave 1				Wave 5			
	Men		Women		Men		Women	
	Cases	%	Cases	%	Cases	%	Cases	%
No suitable jobs	86	18.7	13	14.6	101	38.7	51	30.9
No skills/qualifications	159	34.6	40	44.9	95	36.4	63	38.2
No Australian experience	257	56.0	60	67.4	120	46.0	85	51.5
Nothing in the same occupation as overseas	138	30.1	25	28.1	73	28.0	23	13.9
Couldn't get interview	59	12.9	14	15.7	-	-	-	-
Unsuitable hours	21	4.6	9	10.1	-	-	-	-
Transport	65	14.2	14	15.7	22	8.4	13	7.9
Discrimination	25	5.5	9	10.1	45	17.2	14	8.5
Health reasons	22	4.8	2	2.3	35	13.4	23	13.9
English is not good enough	246	53.6	47	52.8	125	47.9	76	46.1
Total	351		82		261		165	

Source: BNLA Waves 1 and 5.

between 2 and 8). Mean community support was 4.82 for refugee women and 4.79 for refugee men (scores ranged between 3 and 9). Refugee women had an average of 1.97 traumatic experiences and refugee men had an average of 2.12 traumatic experiences prior to arriving in Australia. About 14 per cent of refugee women and 22 per cent of refugee men had spent time in a refugee camp pre-migration.

Results from the multivariate GLMM models are shown in Table 8 by gender for Waves 4 and 5. The results indicate better oral language proficiency, study/job training, age 36–45 (compared with under 25), completion of a university degree pre-migration (compared with never having attended school) and spending time in a refugee

TABLE 8 Generalized linear mixed models of factors associated with paid employment.

	Men (Waves 4 and 5)	Women (Waves 4 and 5)
	Odds ratio (95% CI)	Odds ratio (95% CI)
Oral language proficiency	1.280*** (1.076–1.523)	1.567*** (1.162–2.113)
Wave	1.925*** (1.397–2.654)	1.058 (0.639–1.752)
Employed pre-migration	0.493** (0.283–0.861)	0.132*** (0.054–0.324)
Study/job training	0.893 (0.554–1.437)	4.401*** (1.797–10.779)
Fair or poor SAH	0.442*** (0.275–0.712)	0.433** (0.189–0.988)
Probable serious mental illness	0.415** (0.212–0.815)	0.467 (0.169–1.292)
PTSD	0.530** (0.314–0.894)	1.537 (0.677–3.488)
Married or has partner	1.452 (0.826–2.551)	0.784 (0.358–1.720)
IRSAD decile	1.197*** (1.088–1.317)	1.151* (0.986–1.343)
Migration pathway	2.517*** (1.263–5.018)	0.329 (0.054–2.015)
Lives in major cities	0.186*** (0.075–0.462)	0.259** (0.076–0.880)
Lived with close family in Wave 1	0.224*** (0.123–0.406)	0.338* (0.104–1.100)
Traumatic experiences pre-arrival	0.904 (0.764–1.069)	1.016 (0.756–1.365)
Spent time in refugee camps	1.925** (1.008–3.679)	5.408*** (1.640–17.830)
Community support	1.026 (0.941–1.118)	1.102 (0.958–1.267)
(base)		
6 or less years of school	0.462* (0.201–1.060)	2.609 (0.567–11.997)
7–12 years of school	0.992 (0.436–2.255)	3.572* (0.793–16.094)
Trade or technical qualification	0.387 (0.114–1.311)	1.381 (0.150–12.705)
University degree	1.549 (0.516–4.645)	9.434** (1.372–64.875)
Aged under 25 (base)		
Aged 26–35	1.567 (0.777–3.160)	3.060* (0.997–9.388)
Aged 36–45	0.845 (0.378–1.889)	7.558*** (2.197–26.004)
Aged 46–55	0.418* (0.171–1.022)	1.982 (0.424–9.272)
Aged 56–65	0.035*** (0.009–0.138)	0.135 (0.007–2.768)
Aged over 65 years	0.001*** (0.000–0.026)	-
Middle-East (base)		
Central Asia	1.907* (0.963–3.774)	1.742 (0.559–5.427)
South Asia	0.623 (0.256–1.517)	4.421* (0.823–23.754)
South-East Asia	9.104*** (2.665–31.098)	9.553*** (1.891–48.268)
Africa	3.195** (1.087–9.394)	0.744 (0.138–4.013)
Random effect		
Constant	5.159 (3.390–7.851)	7.987 (4.026–15.846)
Number of individuals	1024	827
Number of observations	1817	1497
Log-likelihood	−861.477	−383.510
Pseudo R squared	0.216	0.158

Abbreviations: CI, confidence interval; IRSAD, Index of Relative Socio-economic Advantage and Disadvantage; PTSD, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder; SAH, self-assessed health. *$p<0.10$. **$p<0.05$. ***$p<0.01$.

camp were associated with a higher likelihood of paid work for refugee women. Fair to very poor self-assessed general health, living in a major city and pre-migration employment were associated with a lower likelihood of paid work.

There are gender differences in the results from the models. Firstly, a 1-point increase in oral language proficiency was estimated to be associated with a 57 per cent higher likelihood of paid work for refugee women (OR = 1.567, 95% CI 1.16–2.11) compared with 28 per cent for men (OR = 1.280, 95% CI 1.08–1.52). Se pcond, undertaking study or job training in Australia was associated with a four times higher likelihood of paid work for refugee women (OR = 4.401, 95% CI 1.80–10.78) but had no significant association with paid work for refugee men. Third, completion of a university degree pre-migration was associated with being 9 times more likely to be in paid work compared with never having attended school for refugee women (OR = 9.434, 95% CI 1.37–64.88) but pre-migration educational attainment had no statistically significant association with paid work for refugee men. Fourth, spending time in a refugee camp was associated with a 5 times higher likelihood of paid work for refugee women (OR = 5.408, 95% CI 1.64–7.83). For refugee men, spending time in a refugee camp was associated with almost twice the likelihood of paid work (OR = 1.925, 95% CI 1.01–3.68).

Other gender differences in the results were an increase in decile of relative socio-economic advantage of area of residence associated with a 20 per cent increase in the likelihood of paid work for refugee men (OR = 1.197, 95% CI 1.09–1.32), but there is weaker evidence on this for refugee women. For refugee women, age 36–45 was associated with more than 7 times higher likelihood of paid work compared with age under 25 (OR = 7.558, 95% CI 2.20–26.00) while age 55 and over was associated with a much lower likelihood of paid work for refugee men. For the region of birth, South-East Asia was associated with a 9 times higher likelihood of paid work for refugee women (OR = 9.553, 95% CI 1.89–48.27) and refugee men (OR = 9.104, 95% CI 2.67–31.10) compared with the region of birth in the Middle-East. Refugee men born in Africa were 3 times more likely to be in paid work (OR = 3.195, 95% CI 1.09–9.39) compared with the region of birth in the Middle-East.

There were some similarities in results by gender. Living in major cities was associated with a 74 per cent lower likelihood of paid work for refugee women (OR = 0.259, 95% CI 0.08–0.88) and a similarly large decrease in the likelihood of paid work for refugee men. Fair to very poor self-assessed health was associated with a 57 per cent lower likelihood of paid work for refugee women (OR = 0.433, 95% CI 0.19–0.99) and the size of the estimated effect was similar to the estimate for refugee men. In contrast, for refugee men, probable serious mental illness (OR = 0.415, 95% CI 0.21–0.72) and PTSD (OR = 0.530, 95% CI 0.31–0.78) were found to be associated with a 58 per cent and 47 per cent lower likelihood of paid work respectively, but estimates were not statistically significant for refugee women (perhaps due to low employment rates for women). Pre-migration employment was associated with an 87 per cent lower likelihood of paid work for refugee women (OR = 0.132, 95% CI 0.05–0.32) and a 51 per cent lower likelihood of paid work for refugee men (OR = 0.493, 95% CI 0.28–0.86).

The percentage of respondents who were in paid work increased in each survey wave for refugee men and women; however, the increase in employment rate was much larger in each wave for refugee men than for refugee women. Corresponding with this, the survey wave variable was associated with a higher likelihood of paid work for refugee men in the model results in Table 8 but was not significant for refugee women for whom the increase in employment rate between waves was much lower and was particularly small between Wave 4 and Wave 5 (less than 1%). The model results were robust to the addition or exclusion of variables, variance inflation factors were low and suggested no multicollinearity between independent variables and Stata link tests indicated that there were no specification errors in the multivariate models. Hosmer–Lemeshow tests of goodness of fit suggest that models fit the data well. The random effect accounting for repeated measures in the longitudinal panel data was significant, supporting the use of random effects in the GLMM.

DISCUSSION

The findings from this study confirm the hypothesis that characteristics of employment and factors associated with a higher or lower likelihood of employment for refugee women do differ from those for refugee men. It is therefore important to conduct quantitative analyses disaggregated by sex where possible and to develop targeted and nuanced policy responses to the particular needs of this cohort. The analysis revealed low employment rates for both refugee men and women but particularly for refugee women. While employment rates increased over time for both, the increase for refugee women was slower and only 12.5 per cent of refugee women were employed by 4 years after arrival, compared to 46 per cent for refugee men, suggesting ongoing barriers to employment particularly for women and consistent with the lower rates of employment for refugee women in other national and international studies (Bevelander & Lundh, 2007; Feeney, 2000; Kosyakova et al., 2023; Syed & Murray, 2009). These findings are also consistent with labour market integration often being a long-term process for refugees in part due to poorer physical and mental health associated with the trauma of forced displacement, lower language proficiency of refugees upon arrival and more difficulty in finding employment that matches their skills and qualifications (Fasani et al., 2022). Results from our study indicate that the process of labour market integration may be longer for refugee women than for refugee men. Refugee women who were employed were in lower-skilled occupations than before migration. While this was also the case for refugee men, refugee women are employed in lower-skilled occupations to a larger extent. A range of barriers to employment were identified in the analysis including English language proficiency, knowledge of how to secure a job and a perceived lack of skills and local experience. The lower rates of employment for refugee women and differences in contributing factors compared with refugee men point to the importance of a gender-informed employment strategy for new arrivals.

The study found lower employment rates, particularly for refugee women when compared with pre-migration, suggesting there are additional barriers for refugee women to engage in paid work in Australia than they faced in their countries of origin. By Wave 5 over 80 per cent still said it was hard to get a job and the percentage of refugee women who still said it was hard to get a job at Wave 5 was higher than the percentage for refugee men. A key barrier to employment was not knowing how to look for work, with more than a third of refugee women not knowing how to find a job at all at Wave 5, more than double the percentage of refugee men who did not know at all how to find a job at Wave 5. Non-recognition of overseas qualifications, delays in assessment of qualifications and not being able to obtain employment in the same occupation as pre-migration (Due et al., 2021) may partially explain the lower likelihood of employment for refugees who were employed pre-migration. For refugee women caring responsibilities may additionally delay their entry to the workforce (Salikutluk & Menke, 2021) – they may not yet have tried to secure work – or current support for new arrivals may not be meeting their needs.

Language barriers were also identified, with more than half of both men and women reporting that their English being 'not good enough' made finding employment difficult in Wave 1, not dropping significantly at Wave 5. The multivariate analysis likewise identified oral language proficiency as a predictor of employment outcomes, particularly for women. The impact of English language proficiency has been widely identified as a barrier to employment (Cheng, Wang, Jiang, et al., 2021; Cheng, Wang, & Taksa, 2021; Delaporte & Piracha, 2018) but this is the first study to identify that the impact of English language proficiency on the likelihood of employment in Australia may be larger for refugee women compared with refugee men. A lack of skills and Australian work experience were other key barriers to employment identified by individuals themselves and particularly by refugee women. Pre-migration university qualifications and training in Australia were other key factors associated with employment for refugee women, though these were not significant for men.

The multivariate analysis highlighted other factors that influenced employment outcomes. For example, refugees living outside of major cities had a much higher likelihood of paid work. This may relate to the different nature of urban and regional job markets as well as potentially pointing to different support services available, both of which have an impact on the ability of refugee women to secure paid work. There was also the surprising finding that time in a refugee camp was associated with an increased likelihood of securing employment, particularly for

women. It may be that this relates to educational opportunities available in some refugee camps (Delaporte & Piracha, 2018). NGOs operating in refugee camps also hire refugees for short-term employment (ILO, 2020), which could improve employment prospects after settlement in Australia. There were also differences by region of origin in the findings, with those from South-East Asia having a significantly higher likelihood of securing employment compared with those from the Middle-East. This adds to other research that has highlighted potential cultural differences in employment experiences for refugees in Australia (Bevelander & Lundh, 2007; Colic-Peisker & Tilbury, 2007b) and may relate to variations in cultural norms and understandings of work, discrimination and pre-migration experiences, as well as language skills.

There is evidence that health status can affect employment outcomes for refugees (and vice versa) (Dowling et al., 2022; Lai et al., 2022; Ziersch et al., 2023). Self-assessed health (for both men and women) as well as serious mental illness and PTSD (for men) were associated with employment in this analysis, with worse health associated with a lower likelihood of employment. Likewise, participants themselves identified health issues as acting as a barrier to employment and the number doing so increased in later waves. Given that refugees have worse health outcomes than the general population (Fazel et al., 2005; Gleeson et al., 2020), particularly mental health and that poor health has been identified as a specific integration challenge having a larger effect on refugee women (Liebig & Tronstad, 2018), this finding is noteworthy as it points to the role that employment may play in health post-resettlement. These findings and others in this paper also highlight the interconnectedness of employment as part of integration, where employment can be seen as both a means and marker of integration and also connected to other integration factors such as education and health (Ager & Strang, 2008).

Previous research has shown that refugees who do secure work are often underemployed or employed in precarious jobs with greater job hazards (Dowling et al., 2022; Ziersch et al., 2021, 2023). The concentration of refugee women in caring and manufacturing roles found in this analysis reflects a broader literature that refugee women are often employed in industries with poor pay and conditions such as aged care, cleaning and childcare (Premji & Shakya, 2017; Ziersch et al., 2021). These findings can usefully be considered in the context of labour segmentation theory, which argues there are 'dual stream' employment trajectories that reflect social and institutional forces affecting opportunities for disadvantaged groups, such as refugees and women, relegating them to a 'second division' labour market position (Castles & Miller, 2003; Colic-Peisker & Tilbury, 2006). The greater extent of lower-skilled employment compared to before migration for refugee women points to the importance of not just examining whether refugee women are able to secure employment, but also to consider the nature of work they are employed in and the potential consequences of this for broader integration as well as health and wellbeing.

While some of these findings support the existing literature that highlights barriers to employment for refugees (Colic-Peisker, 2009; Colic-Peisker & Tilbury, 2007a; Hynie, 2018), this study illustrates the importance of considering women specifically and conducting analyses disaggregated by sex given the gender differences in barriers to employment identified in the analyses. It also highlights the importance of intersectional considerations of systems of oppression such as sexism and racism in understanding the influences on employment outcomes for refugee women (Crenshaw, 1989; Pittaway & Bartolomei, 2000). For example, Pittaway and Bartolomei (2000) highlight the gendered factors associated with forced displacement, compounded by racism, as well as how settlement systems and policy approaches have failed to adequately address sexism and racism and their multiplicative impacts in post-settlement contexts. These failures can have ongoing impacts on settlement outcomes, including employment trajectories for refugee women, through the lack of tailored and appropriate support and consideration of the labour market context.

Policy and practice implications

The results highlight the tailored and additional support needed by refugee women to obtain employment and there are a range of policy and practice implications of the findings, which may also be relevant to other

country contexts. First, the substantially lower rates of employment for refugee women and the gender differences found in the analysis speak to the need for specific employment strategies for refugee women. In particular, refugee women may need a longer period of post-settlement support as women's caring responsibilities may mean that they are not searching for work in the first years. The findings also highlight the importance of human capital (education, training and work experience) in increasing the likelihood of employment for refugees and particularly refugee women. Support to fulfil study aspirations could improve labour market prospects for refugee women. Likewise, language supports are clearly important and ensuring English language classes are accessible for refugee women will be crucial, including accommodating for caring responsibilities. A lack of local experience was identified as a key employment barrier. Internships and volunteering are a potential way for refugees to gain such experience, but the ILO has warned of the risk of internships becoming simply a 'disguised form of employment', without any of the benefits of real on-the-job training (ILO, 2012). The findings around health as a potential barrier to employment suggest that initiatives to assist refugees into employment that support health alongside more traditional employment-focused assistance around building resumes and skills development, will likely be more successful in facilitating sustainable employment pathways (Due et al., 2021).

Strengths and limitations

There are methodological limitations in this study. The regression models could only include Waves 4 and 5 due to the limited number of refugee women who were in paid employment in the sample for Waves 1–3. The BNLA study relied on self-reporting and retrospective reporting and thus there is a risk of recall bias and social desirability bias. The sample is comprised of humanitarian migrants who had been recently granted a permanent humanitarian visa as of Wave 1. Experiences of humanitarian migrants in Australia who received a permanent visa are likely to differ from other migrant groups, particularly asylum seekers. We also recognize that the experiences of refugees vary by country of resettlement and that Australia is a particular context in terms of labour market, migration policy and settlement supports (Due et al., 2021). Ager & Strang's (2008) framework was useful to help select our focus variables and examine factors relevant to employment and integration. However, we acknowledge the limitations of this framework, particularly how it may not clearly elucidate the role of receiving country features that crucially impact employment experiences for refugees – for example, local labour market conditions, welfare protections and employer prejudice (Hynie & Korn, 2016; Phillimore, 2021). The strengths of this study are the large, representative, longitudinal data in the BNLA dataset that enabled analysis of factors associated with a higher likelihood of employment a few years after settling in Australia and the depth of information collected in the employment module of the BNLA that provided detailed information on employment experiences for refugee men and women.

This study focuses on the formal labour market in Australia. There is limited research on informal employment, particularly in Australia where data are not available on informal employment, but qualitative research does suggest that informal work is associated with exploitation, discrimination, precariousness and poor working conditions (Ziersch et al., 2021).

CONCLUSION

This paper adds to the literature by providing detailed descriptive and multivariate quantitative analysis of barriers and enablers of employment for refugees disaggregated by sex. The results provide insight into the characteristics of employment for refugee women in Australia and how these differ in important ways from employment for refugee men. The paper demonstrates the substantial barriers facing women from refugee

backgrounds when seeking to enter employment in Australia and to sustain meaningful involvement in the labour market. Future research could extend these findings to examine the experiences of asylum seekers on less secure visas and to conduct qualitative research with both men and women in conjunction with quantitative data to better understand how employment barriers manifest. The extent of informal employment in Australia for refugee women, the role of informal work while obtaining language or a qualification and characteristics of informal employment and the movement between informal and formal employment are also topics for future research. Also important is a further examination of intersectional considerations in terms of understanding factors underpinning employment pathways for refugee women, as well as informing the development of appropriate supports. Gender-informed employment strategies are required and future research should examine the impact of current refugee employment support strategies in order to improve these. It is important that refugee women are meaningfully supported into employment and do not permanently remain outside the labour market because of these barriers or become entrenched in low-skilled employment which does not reflect their skills, experience and aspirations.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors report there are no competing interests to declare.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data analysed in this study are available from the Australian Data Archive Dataverse. Restrictions apply to the availability of these data. BNLA data are available to approved data users and can be applied for via the Australian Data Archive Dataverse https://dataverse.ada.edu.au/dataverse/bnla.

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