



In Search of Normality  
Refugee Integration in Scotland  
Final Report

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## CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

The integration of newcomers into their new society and/or community has been a continual goal of policy among numerous policy-makers and at all levels of Government for many years. The terminology has often undergone change, for example from race relations policies in the 1960s to community cohesion and inclusion in the 2000s, but the aim, at least at the rhetorical level, has been to find ways and means to facilitate integration. While actual policy intervention has often been somewhat sparse, and that which does exist has in many cases been undermined by policy and rhetoric in other policy areas that contradicts the goal of integration, until recently Britain has witnessed broad political agreement that multiculturalism and integration were the dual goals of immigrant policy (what happens once people arrive here) as opposed to immigration policy (the management of entry). In general any policy that does exist with regard to supporting integration has tended to be focussed on one migrant group and/or in one defined area of integration such as employment, although the community cohesion agenda has arguably been somewhat broader than that.

With regard to refugees and asylum seekers, a migrant group only defined in policy in 1994, up until which point they were processed under general immigration policy, British Government policy over the past decade has tended to try and differentiate the two, with the integration of refugees a rhetorical aim and the integration of asylum seekers not viewed in policy as desirable<sup>1</sup>. Thus policy interventions where they have existed have been aimed solely at those who have had their claims for refugee status approved. The Sunrise programme followed by the Refugee Integration and Employment Service have each received central Government funding to try to aid newly recognised refugees in relation to employability and employment and to some degree in terms of accessing secure housing. Although these Government programmes were somewhat limited, they did at least provide some financial support to the integration of refugees. Other aspects of integration have not been addressed by specific interventions but have in some cases been caught up within broader policy debates such as those around community cohesion, social inclusion/exclusion and wider immigration policy as well as numerous social policy issues such as those around health and education. However, successive UK Governments have been explicit that prior to getting refugees status people should not be integrated. Therefore asylum seekers are not included in any programmes, their integration not a desired outcome of policy. Subsequently their rights and entitlements were restricted. This division has had consequences, however, not the least of which has been to delay integration support for asylum seekers who subsequently go on to be granted refugee status. While up-front and

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<sup>1</sup> The United Nations High Commission for Refugees defines three 'durable solutions' to refugees to rebuild their lives in dignity and peace. These are voluntary repatriation; local integration; or resettlement to a third where they can't return home or stay in host country.

intensive support is highlighted as key by the UK Government's own Survey of New Refugees<sup>2</sup>, delayed support can therefore have long term negative consequences. Nevertheless, the UK Government in recent years has ended all financial and administrative support for integration, leaving a vacuum that the voluntary sector has attempted to fill. While immigration and asylum in a broad sense remains a reserved policy area under the devolution settlement, this does not mean that all aspects of the lives of asylum seekers and refugees come under the remit of the UK Government. Taking Hammar's view of the difference between immigration policy and immigrant policy<sup>3</sup>, many aspects of social policy such as health, education and social work are devolved. There are also areas where the division of responsibility is more complex. Housing for asylum seekers, for example, is provided by the UK Government under contract to agencies. However, housing for refugees is the responsibility of the Scottish Government and Scottish Local Authorities. On being recognised as a refugee, therefore, responsibility effectively becomes devolved<sup>4</sup>.

The Scottish Government, in contrast to the approach of the UK Government, has taken the rhetorical position that integration does not begin on the day on which an asylum seeker becomes a refugee, but on their first day of arrival in Scotland. While there are many policy areas that would require further devolution of powers for the Scottish Government to move their integration from day one position beyond the rhetorical, in some cases they have made the most of the powers that they do have in order to facilitate integration<sup>5</sup>. In other areas where the Scottish Government do not have power, they have verbalised their position with regard to integration from day one despite not having the policy levers to do much in many cases.

Thus the policy context into which refugees and asylum seekers attempt to integrate is complex and often contradictory. Policy areas interact with one another, with the status of individuals and with the constitutional settlement to create an environment that can be difficult to comprehend and which often appears to lack coherence. What is more, actual policy, including its effects, is but one part of integration processes, as Ager and Strang's 'Indicators of Integration' framework suggests. Well-meaning policy in one area of integration

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<sup>2</sup> Cebulla A., M. Daniel and A. Zurawan (2010) Spotlight on refugee integration: findings from the Survey of New Refugees in the United Kingdom. Home Office Research Report 37. London: RDS, Home Office. <http://rds.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs10/horr37b.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Hammar points out the immigration policy concerns entry and the right to stay whereas immigrant policy is about all aspects of social policy once people have arrived. Hammar, Tomas (2006) European Immigration Policy: A Comparative Study in The Migration Reader; Exploring Politics and Policies Messina and Lahav (Eds) Lynne Rienner Publishers US

<sup>4</sup> For more see [Refugees in Scotland after the Referendum \(PDF\)](http://www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk/policy_and_research/research_reports)  
[http://www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk/policy\\_and\\_research/research\\_reports](http://www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk/policy_and_research/research_reports)

<sup>5</sup> The Scottish Government have provided extra support for asylum seekers to pursue educational courses, improved health access to refused asylum seekers and fund other local integration initiatives

can sometimes have minimal effects if not accompanied by rights across all aspects of integration.

### Indicators of Integration Framework

This research project began by conducting both a theoretical and an empirical review of the literature<sup>6</sup>. After doing so Ager and Strang’s ‘Indicators of Integration’ framework was used as it provides the most comprehensive and holistic basis in which to analyse the series of complex and interdependent processes that encompass integration. There are a number of dimensions of this framework and this report attempts to use the framework as a structuring as well as heuristic device. Although the framework is used here in a way that takes each aspect in turn it is recognised and highlighted where required that each aspect of integration, domains in Ager and Strang’s terminology, is not distinct but is linked to many others.



Figure 1<sup>7</sup> – Indicators of Integration Framework

Ager and Strang’s framework highlights the importance of access *and* achievement within housing; employment; education; and health. While these are high level indicators, underpinning them are the more fundamental issues of citizenship and rights which not only impact upon access and outcomes, but also mediate the processes of social connections and how they relate to access and outcomes<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> [http://www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk/policy\\_and\\_research](http://www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk/policy_and_research)

<sup>7</sup> Ager and Strang 2004 <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs04/dpr28.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> Ager and Strang 2008 page 166

For Ager and Strang rights underpin all other aspects of integration. They are “the foundation of integration policy, to which governments are accountable”<sup>9</sup>. Ager and Strang raise a number of dimensions to ‘rights’ understood in their broadest sense. These include human dignity, equality, freedom of cultural choice, justice, security and independence. These are all taken as first order rights, implying that they are more immutable, while second order rights such as rights to citizenship, family reunion and equality are derived from these first order rights. Therefore rights underpin all other aspects of integration. The interplay between rights, or lack thereof, and integration processes are key to understanding both the processes themselves and potentially how policy does or does not, or can or cannot facilitate integration or militate against it.

Implicit in the framework but perhaps not developed to the same degree as the other aspects of integration is that of emotional or psychological integration. As is shown in this report and elsewhere<sup>10</sup>, the sense of belonging that refugees feel towards place can have a significant impact upon their ability to rebuild their lives in that place.

It is important in reading this research that the individuals involved are in no way infantilised. While the research highlights a number of barriers to integration and the support required to enable many respondents to fully rebuild their lives in Scotland, it is also important to keep in mind that refugees and asylum seekers have shown and continue to show huge levels of self-sufficiency and motivation across all aspects of their lives. While support is often required to enable progress, the contributions that refugees and asylum seekers make despite the barriers they face, many of which are institutional barriers, should never be ignored. Initial and on-going support would enable this contribution to be even greater.

### **Aims of the Research Project**

The project began from the premise that little is known about the lives of refugees in Scotland. There almost appeared to be an assumption that on being recognised as a refugee people are simply able to begin the process of re-building their lives, and this was an assumption that staff at Scottish Refugee Council felt needed challenged. We were also interested in looking at the lives of *both* asylum seekers and refugees across a range of areas of life. Some of the research in other parts of the UK on refugee integration had focussed on one or two aspects of integration, but we wanted to look at integration as a multi-faceted set of processes. We also wanted to look at some of the impacts of the asylum process on the lives of refugees post-status. Thus we began with the propositions that a. little is known about refugee integration in Scotland b. refugee integration requires support

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<sup>9</sup> Ager and Strang 2008 page 175

<sup>10</sup> See for example Stewart and Mulvey Becoming British citizens? Experiences and opinions of refugees living in Scotland [http://www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk/policy\\_and\\_research/research\\_reports](http://www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk/policy_and_research/research_reports)



across a range of areas post status and c. the asylum process has a series of impacts on the ability of refugees to successfully integrate.

The project also set out to be a longitudinal one. Much research about refugees has been snap-shot, providing useful analysis but analysis that could be located within a specific period of time. We wanted to overcome some of this limitation by tracking refugees and asylum seekers across a period of time, and by also reflecting both backwards and forwards in participants' lives. We also adopted a mixed methods approach whereby both quantitative and qualitative forms of inquiry were utilised. As such the methods are viewed as complimentary rather than competing.

## Methodology

The empirical research broadly had five stages. These are shown in the figure below.

Figure 2

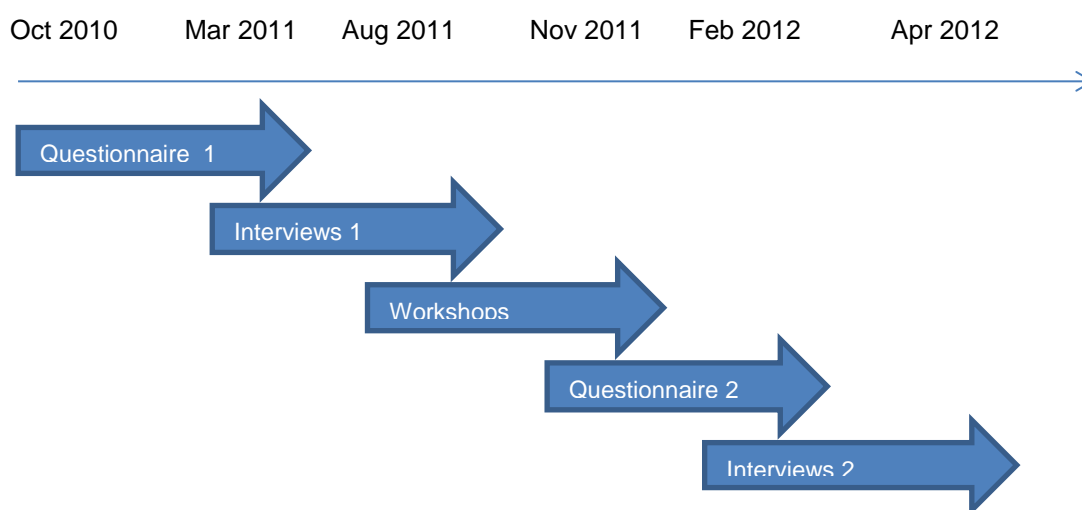


Figure 2 – Study Timeline

Stage 1 – Stage 1 was the devising and circulation of a substantial questionnaire. Questions were devised that dealt with each part of the Indicators of Integration framework and where possible questions from existing surveys were replicated to aid comparison<sup>11</sup>. The survey was piloted and on successful piloting was translated into all of the main languages among the refugee and asylum seeking communities in Scotland. The circulation of the questionnaire began internally, with staff at Scottish Refugee Council passing it on to clients. However, this was both numerically and methodologically inadequate as we wanted to uncover experiences of people who do not come into Scottish Refugee Councils office. This would primarily be refugees who no longer accessed advice and support at Scottish Refugee Council. The next part of the distribution involved contacting other organisations and agencies involved with asylum seekers and refugees in both Edinburgh and Glasgow.

<sup>11</sup> Questions from the Go-Well study, Scottish Social Attitudes Survey and the Scottish Household Survey were used in the Questionnaire

Surveys were delivered to these organisations along with pre-paid envelopes for return. This allowed a wider distribution and meant that we have a reasonable cross section of the asylum seeker and refugee community. However, one area missing is those who are not literate in their first language as being able to fill in the survey was a requirement of participation. Nevertheless, all responses received were put into SPSS for analysis<sup>12</sup>.

Stage 2 – Having obtained 262 survey responses, Stage 2 concerned follow-up interviews with 40 of those who had completed the questionnaire and agreed to being contacted for further research. Responses were grouped by gender and status and a sample of potential interviewees established using a combination of purposive sampling and some degree of opportunistic sampling making up the final 40. Of those contacted over three quarters responded positively to a request for interview. Interview schedules were developed to try to elicit information on all of the topics covered in the survey and they generally lasted between 45 minutes to an hour (the schedule was informed by analysis of survey responses). Interviewees were given a voucher as a thank you for participation. This was the case in all interviews and workshops. Interviews were recorded, although two participants asked not to be recorded, and a professional transcription service was used to transcribe the interviews due to time constraints. The interviews were then analysed using a simplified form of discourse analysis so as to avoid the necessity of full coding. The parts of the interviews deemed relevant were then used to ascertain experiences and where possible trends.

Stage 3 – one outcome of stage 1 was a large proportion of respondents appearing to be unable to answer any questions that included the term ‘community’. It was felt that there were two possible reasons for this. The first is that the way we use the term community is to some degree culturally determined and respondents therefore did not feel able to answer questions due to terminological confusion. The other was that the relatively high degree of housing churn<sup>13</sup> meant people who thought of community in spatial terms felt unable to answer due to not having lived in their local areas long enough.

In addition, Ager and Strang’s framework highlights integration as a two-way process between refugees and the ‘host’ community. We had therefore always planned on doing some research with the ‘host’ community. These two issues led to Stage 3, which were two workshops in the same local area looking at both the concept of community and about what both refugees and the host participants would like their community to look like. The workshop used the Ketso research tool which allows all participants to engage in a non-

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<sup>12</sup> In terms of quantitative data, wherever relevant comparisons are made with data in other surveys. The surveys used are the Scottish Social Attitudes survey in 2010, the Scottish Household Survey in 2009 and the Survey of New Refugees conducted between 2005 and 2009 and the Go-Well study.

<sup>13</sup> A large proportion of refugees have only lived in their present accommodation for a relatively short period of time. See more in chapter 4 on housing and neighbourhoods.

threatening and creative environment. One workshop was with the 'host' community and one with a mix of asylum seekers and refugees. The results were written up using the same methods as that used for interviews but the sessions were also photographed allowing for a visual representation of discussions, an example of which is in Chapter 8 on community and neighbourhood.

Stage 4 – As this study was a longitudinal one Stage 4 was a re-issue of a modified survey some 18 months after the initial one had been completed. All of those who had agreed to remain part of the project were re-contacted on their given contact details. Unfortunately many respondents have subsequently changed their contact details while others did not respond to requests for completion of the questionnaire. This meant that the number of responses in the follow-up survey was disappointingly low. Nevertheless, those who did respond were matched with their initial responses in SPSS and changes in situations highlighted where they emerged in order to provide a rich data source in the form of cohort analysis.

Stage 5 – Of the 40 participants involved in interview Stage 2, 34 agreed to take part in further interviews in Stage 5. Instead of attempting once again to ask all questions of all participants it was decided that the second interviews would be thematic, looking in more depth at the various parts of the Framework. We wanted to find out how those who had been more or less successful in some aspects of their integration had done so. This meant that for the employment questions it was only people in work that we interviewed and likewise only those who had experience of education in Scotland were interviewed in the education interviews. The health questions attempted to focus on those who had had some health problems and therefore had more experience of the health system in Scotland. In the housing interviews we wanted to focus on those with some degree of choice so looked only at refugees. This meant that the 'pool' of interviewees left for the interviews on community and neighbourhood was somewhat limited, meaning they would be less likely to be in education or work, have an on-going health problem or be an asylum seeker. Interviews were transcribed and analysed in the same way as stages 2 and 3.

Case studies – the longitudinal nature of this research project also lends itself to the use of case studies. Many of those involved in both survey and interview stages have been used as case studies to demonstrate the progress, or lack thereof, of refugees traversing the system. These case studies are interspersed throughout the report.

Direct quotes from participants in this report are designated with a letter and a number. This was the code originally assigned to questionnaires. Those that begin with an E were in

English while, for example Far was Farsi and M is Mandarin. Where the number is followed by -2, the quote comes from a follow up interview conducted as part of Stage 5 of the project.

### **Structure**

The report is structured according to the 'Indicators of Integration' framework. It begins by highlighting some of the demographic details of the research report. Chapter 2 concerns *employment*, looking at both experiences of employment in respondents' countries of origin and their experience of work and the search for work here. It also looks at the benefits of employment and some of the difficulties experienced by respondents. Chapter 3 looks at *housing* by examining experiences of housing, housing churn, conditions and comparisons with previous housing experiences. It also looks at housing aspirations, with obvious connections to the chapter on community due to the link between views of housing and views of locality. Chapter 4 concerns *education*. This looks at respondent's experience of education prior to arrival in Scotland as well as experiences of education here, along with any problems in terms of access. Chapter 4 also looks at aspirations in relation to education. Chapter 5 examines how respondents feel about their *health*, what factors they feel have impacted upon their health and their experience of accessing health care while in Scotland. Chapter 6 examines what people think of when they discuss the word *community* before going on to look at how they feel about their community. This includes friendship groups as well as the existence of family nearby. It finally looks at notions of belonging to communities as well as community cohesion. There follow two chapters that attempt to draw out issues that cut across many if not all of the first 6 chapters. Chapter 7 looks at the *processes of integration*, beginning with the effect of the asylum process on integration. It then goes on to look at time, with a particular focus on time waiting both during and after getting refugee status. Language is also a key part of the processes of integration and so chapter 6 looks at language followed by issues surrounding children and parenthood. Chapter 8 concerns *what people integrate into*. This begins with the initial welcome people experience, including experiences of discrimination. The chapter then goes on to look at the spatial units people feel they integrate into, before looking at socio-economic issues in relation to people 'being asked' to integrate into poverty. The chapter then looks at the issue of normality. That is, people want to feel and be treated as if they are normal. This search for normality also cuts across many other processes highlighted in previous chapters.

## CHAPTER 2 - DEMOGRAPHICS

People from thirty seven countries are represented in this report, covering most of the nationalities that are known to have come to Scotland in the past 10 years. This chapter contains the demographic information obtained in Survey 1 as this was both larger and more representative of the population involved. The largest national response groups are shown in the graph below.

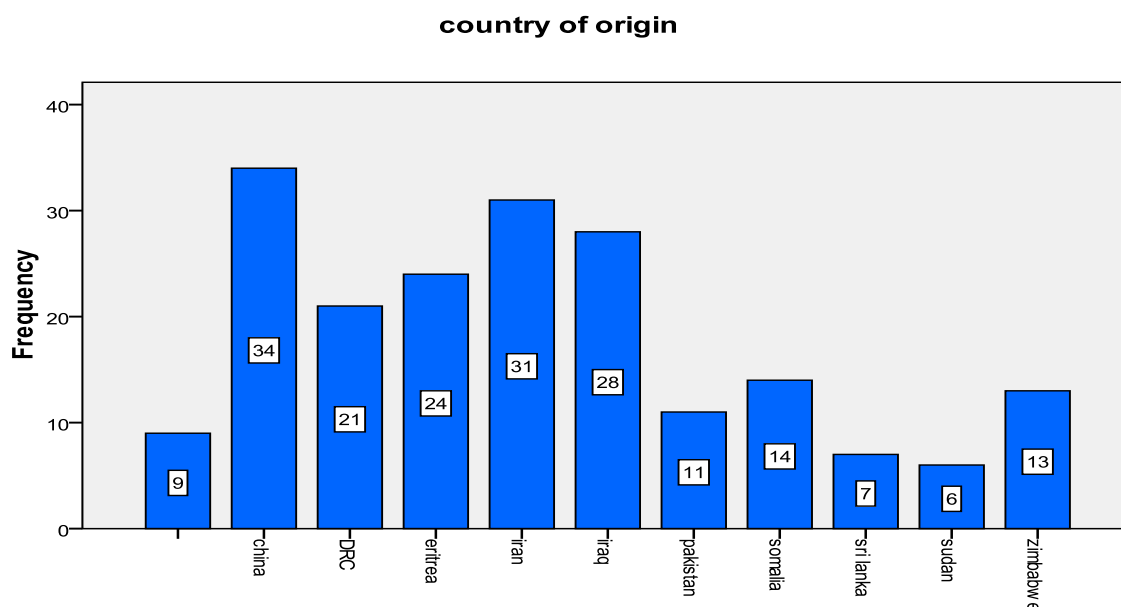


Figure 3 – country of origin

In terms of year of arrival not surprisingly our sample is slanted toward slightly more recent arrivals but there is still a reasonable representation among those who arrived in each year from 2001.

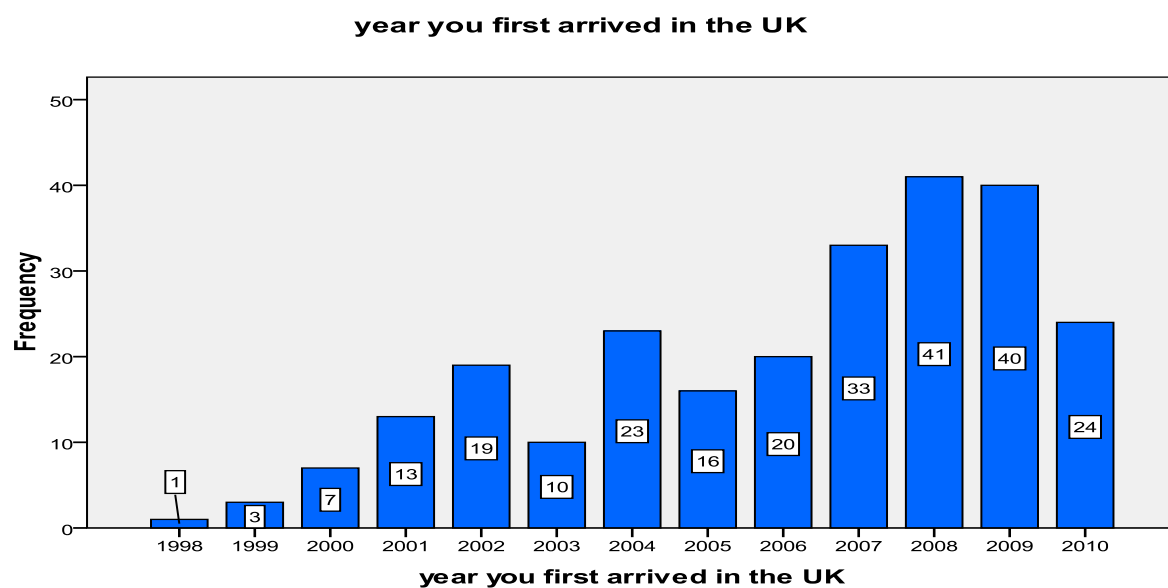


Figure 4 – year of arrival in the UK

Interestingly, in our sample, unlike other studies of refugees and asylum seekers there is a higher representation of women than of men. The Scottish sample in the Survey of New Refugees run by the UKBA, for example, had a 54/46 male/female split.

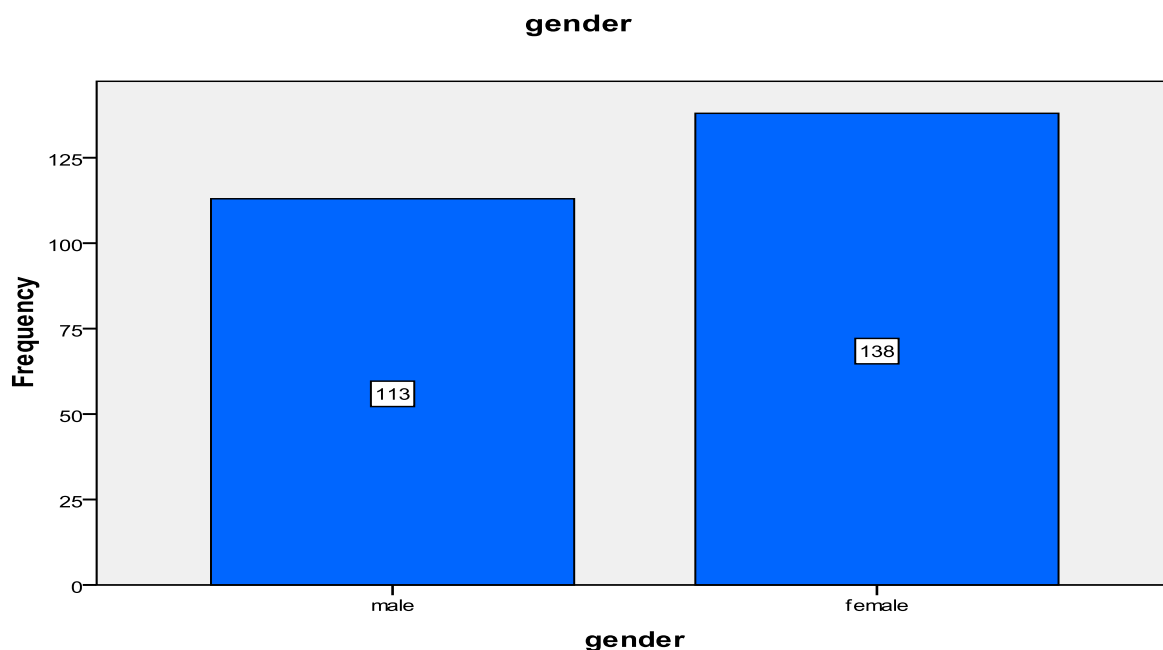


Figure 5 – gender

The responses we have by marital status also broadly reflect what we know of the asylum seeker and refugee population in Britain.

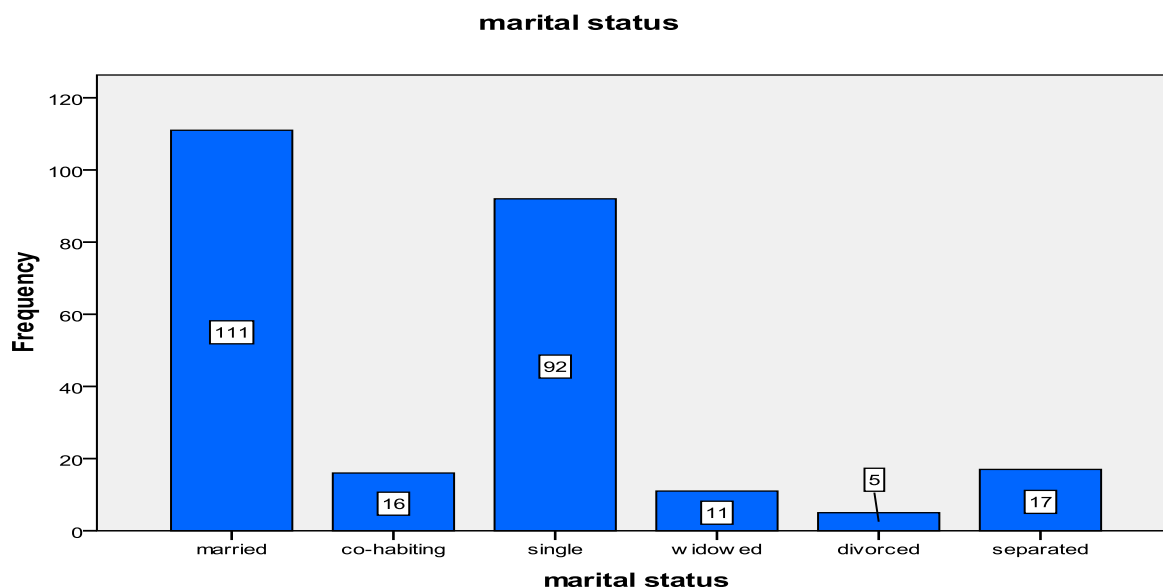
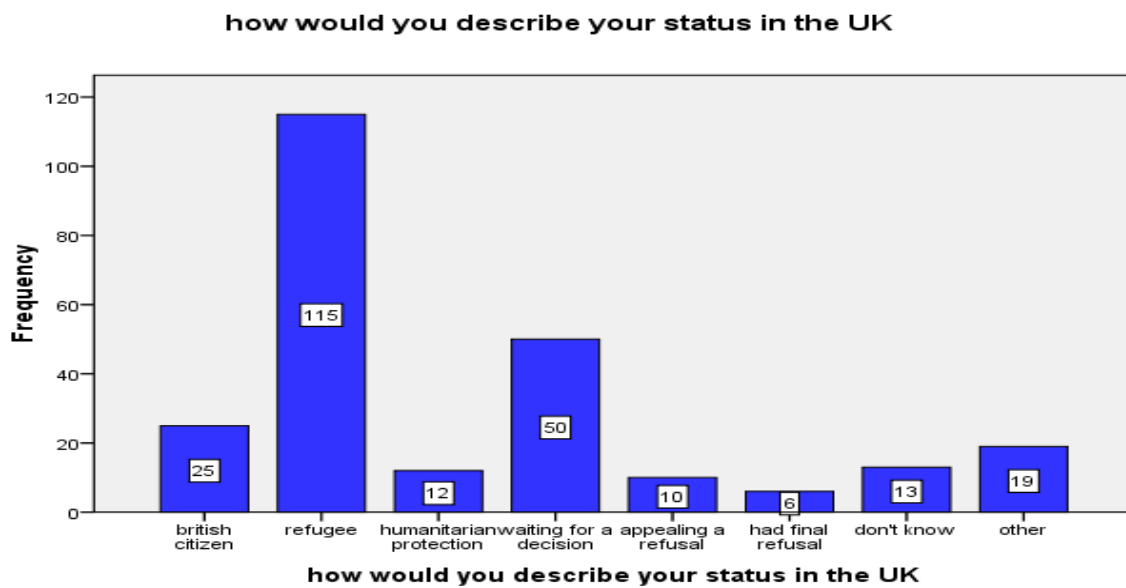


Figure 6 – Marital status

As will be discussed in the employment section below, there is some confusion among respondents in relation to how they describe their status in the UK. While some respondents state that they do not know their status, others are either confused as to their status, or do

not know whether their status gives them the right to work. Nevertheless, overall status figures are given below.



**Figure 7 – Description of Status in the UK**

For the purposes of other analysis such as comparing responses by status, it simplified the results to be able to group them into two, those still going through the asylum process, including those refused, and those with some form of leave to remain, including the 25 who identified as being British citizens. The results are as follows:

**Table 1 - Status**

status		
	Frequency	Percent
refugee	154	62.1
asylum seeker	78	31.5
don't know	3	1.2
other	13	5.2
Total	248	100.0

The age profile of participants broadly reflects what we know of the asylum seeker and refugee population in Scotland.

**Table 2 - Age**

age	
	Percent
16-20	5.2
21-30	38.9
31-40	32.1
41-50	17.9
51-60	4.8
61+	1.2
Total	100.0

# CHAPTER 3 - EMPLOYMENT AND FINANCES

## Introduction

Employment has been identified in a number of studies as a key factor that enables migrants to build their lives in countries other than their country of origin, that is, to integrate. As far as refugees are concerned, employment has been one of the domains subject to both the most analysis as well as the dominant aspect of any governmental interventions. However, what has been known from previous research is that labour market outcomes are generally poor, with unemployment and underemployment persistent issues for refugees. This chapter examines both the qualitative and quantitative data across 4 stages of the research, looking at numbers in work, the types of work that they are in, barriers to employment, how people traverse the labour market, employment aspirations as well as the types of benefits resulting from employment. The section then goes on to look at finances, how people feel about their past, present and future financial situation and whether work is a key factor in overcoming financial difficulties.

## Access to labour market

In the first survey we asked respondents about their present employment status. This was to discover the levels of employment, but also the number of people doing voluntary work, in education, and those unemployed and looking for work. What became immediately clear is that employment levels were very low, with just thirty-two people, just over 20% of those entitled to work indicating that they were in some form of paid employment. Large numbers were either unemployed and/or in education. Women were slightly less likely than men to be working. Although the small sample of people working makes this finding less than conclusive, this perspective is supported by earlier research about refugee employment (Bloch 2004).

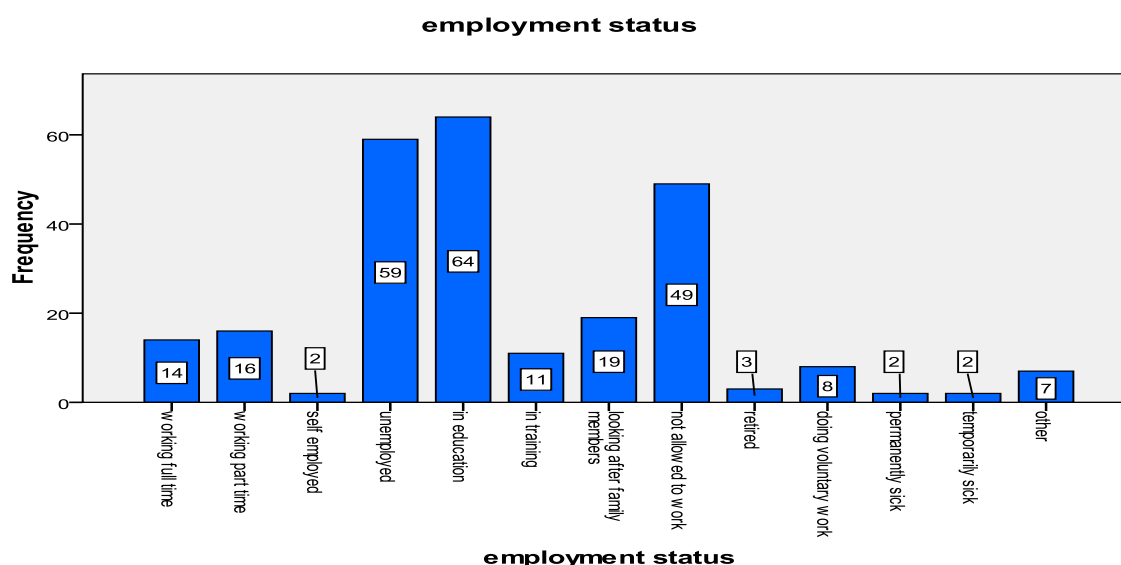


Figure 8 – Employment Status in Survey 1



The Scottish sample of the Survey of New Refugees showed that 34% were employed 8 months after obtaining leave to remain. A further 4.7 % were self-employed, 20.7% were looking after family and just 4.7% were unemployed. This means that the likelihood of being in employment was much lower for our sample. When comparing these results to the overall Scottish population through the Scottish Household Survey, we find that just 7% of men and 3% women were unemployed in that survey, again considerably less than in our sample (at 30%), although with a similar gender dimension. Important points of note when making such comparisons are the relatively small numbers of refugees indicating that they were retired compared to the general population, and the number of our sample attending educational courses. Nevertheless employment levels remain worryingly low.

Further questioning about previous work in the UK suggested that these low levels of employment were not snap shot findings whereby respondents were questioned at a period where they were temporarily out of work. Neither were they attributable to the economic downturn. Instead the indication is that refugees are in a constant struggle to access the labour market regardless of either how long they have been in the UK or the skill levels that they have. Many of our respondents indicated that as well as their primary employment status, they were often had one or more secondary statuses. This was mostly people in education, volunteering or looking after family members, but all suggest both busy lives, and a degree of attention being paid to improving skill sets with the aim of accessing employment.

While these fairly bleak results chime with previous research, there was some improvement among those who took part in the follow-up survey with regard to employment outcomes. The small numbers completing the follow-up survey mean that these results should be treated with caution. It is plausible that those with more successful employment outcomes are more likely to have completed the survey due to being more stable in relation to housing, indicating the connectedness of domains, and also by wanting to talk about their relative success against those not having experienced any success being somewhat less inclined to answer questions about their perceived lack of progress. Nevertheless, among Survey 1 respondents who also completed the follow-up questionnaire only 5 were in some form of employment, 2 working full-time, 2 working part-time and one self-employed. Looking at those same respondents 18 months later we see a total of 14 people in paid work, 5 full-time and 9 part-time. Looking at the figures in more detail, there is little change in the numbers not allowed to work, and the number of people unemployed is the exact same in each survey. Indeed all of those who indicated that they were unemployed in Survey 1 were also unemployed at Survey 2. What this shows is that a number of the people who were doing

voluntary work or who were in education at the time of Survey 1 have subsequently found work. This is confirmed in follow-up interviews, more details of which are provided later in this chapter.

**Table 3 – Employment Status**

<b>Employment status</b>	Survey 1	Survey 2	Total
working full-time	<b>5.8%</b>	<b>12.9%</b>	<b>6.6%</b>
working part-time	<b>6.2%</b>	<b>19.4%</b>	<b>7.6%</b>
self employed	<b>.8%</b>	<b>.0%</b>	<b>.7%</b>
unemployed	<b>23.0%</b>	<b>22.6%</b>	<b>22.9%</b>
in education	<b>24.9%</b>	<b>19.4%</b>	<b>24.3%</b>
in training	<b>4.3%</b>	<b>.0%</b>	<b>3.8%</b>
not allowed to work	<b>19.1%</b>	<b>16.1%</b>	<b>18.8%</b>

This improvement should not be viewed as those trying to get job ready through volunteering and education being successful with those who did not remaining unemployed. On further examination, most of those who identified as being unemployed were also doing voluntary work and/or some form of education. This points to other reasons for success and lack thereof, in accessing the labour market.

One question asked in the follow-up survey that was not asked in the initial questionnaire concerned advice services. Ten of twenty-three people who answered the question said that they had received employment advice. There were a variety of organisations that provided advice to refugees about employment and there was general satisfaction with this advice. Caution is required regarding this point, however, as there is evidence in other studies of disadvantaged groups that the provision of any advice rather than the quality of that advice as well as any outcomes is what people feel appreciative of<sup>14</sup>. There are also some concerns regarding the limits of advice pertaining to the types of employment options being suggested by advice providers, more on which below. Nevertheless advice and support were valued and outcomes of those accessing support were often contrasted with those who did not, with support viewed as having a positive impact on employment prospects. One man spoke of getting support from services to access employment and contrasted his outcomes to friends who had not had such support. This started as part-time work but he was confident that this would progress to full-time work in time. He remained hugely grateful and pleased at the progression made. “when I look back, it’s like ok, it was harder, I couldn’t even believe one

<sup>14</sup>Gillespie, Mulvey and Scott Transitions to Employment: Advising Disadvantaged Groups  
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2005/09/09104955/50005>

day I would be working independent and freely, and earn money, you know what I mean.....but now, that's done, it's a journey that's gone" (E144).

### **Case Study 1**

E140 is a woman from southern Africa who was recognised as a refugee in early 2009. She had high level English language skills on arrival and so did not need language education. She has an employment background in finance but reached an early decision, due to arriving at a time when the financial sector was contracting, to not attempt to access employment in that sector. On arrival she received information about the labour market from a number of voluntary sector organisations.

She has a long-standing health problem that has limited her employment options but these options have also been limited by her own early experiences in the employment market. Despite having accessed employment advice from reputable bodies E140 eventually found work through Job Centre Plus. The job was in social care but after having started she became aware that she was being paid below the minimum wage. The reason that this was not apparent at first was that the position was a live-in one and the costs of accommodation had therefore not been factored in prior to her accepting the job. E140 had subsequently accessed some employment through the use of agencies but the irregularity of the hours made life very difficult to plan. While doing agency work she had also volunteered and had managed to get qualifications through that voluntary work. She feels that this has allowed her to be a little pickier when looking at more permanent work.

Between interview 1 and interview 2 E140 had managed to obtain full-time employment in social care on a slightly higher wage than she had had in her casual jobs. She found this employment through Job Centre Plus rather than through any of the agencies she had used over the years. Although E140 likes her job she does not feel she is using many of the skills that she has. She would ultimately like to move back into employment in a sector that uses her skill set and is more challenging but in the short term is happy to remain where she is. That said, E140 sees herself as at the beginning of her employment journey in Scotland and feels that she will progress in the coming years.

On a small income at interview 1 E140 was attempting to send money to her children in her country of origin. However, by interview 2 she had successfully managed to move her children here. While this has had a major emotional impact, even with her having obtained a full-time job the financial pressures have significantly increased. Nevertheless, the nature of her work, 12 hour shifts, and the age of her children whereby one is old enough to look after the other, means that she feels she has a very positive work/life balance.

### **Barriers to Employment**

As highlighted above, the struggle to access the labour market is a major issue for most refugees. One major issue in this regard concerns the period in which peoples skills and qualifications are not utilised. One participant said "I'm 35 and I'm sitting....I've got qualifications, I've got...I'm a healthy person, I can do anything, and that's being wasted" (E750). Another talked of the time period between previous and future employment and concerns over deskilling during that period. "I've got a gap between my previous experience and now. I need to know what kind of experience they have here in this country" (E33). The existence of gaps in employment histories are a major concern among many refugees. Many indicated that they felt they had been left behind in terms of technological developments and will face an uphill struggle to try to overcome these gaps. Others just feel that employers are

less likely to offer them work if they do not have recent activity in that sector of the labour market.

Among refugee professionals temporal issues and gaps in employment history often intersect to dissuade them from following their previous career paths. Time to get refugee status and time to update skills and/or get skills recognised discourages many refugees from going through the process of upgrading skills and go through the process of recognition of qualifications. One woman said that “it’s very difficult to find a job. Because I was a lecturer at university. I was a psychologist, counsellor and researcher. My job is difficult and hard to find something qualified to this kind of job” (E33). What is more employment and language intersect to produce barriers to integration. One man spoke of delaying looking for work until his language skills were more fully developed. (Far 27). While it seems logical that language skills should be developed prior to employment being sought, this also contributes to the issue of employment gaps mentioned above. Waiting lists for language courses are significant and added to issues with the time taken to make language improvements, and employment gaps can therefore increase accordingly. Not only was career development put on hold, there was also the risk of existing skill sets becoming redundant. “You can lose your skills if, you know, eight years, nine years, you can’t, what can I say? To improve to exercise your skill, but it’s not good. It’s very bad because you can’t use it”(E460).

The implications of not working during the asylum process were mentioned by many of the interviewees, even those who had a relatively quick decision on their asylum claim. Many made allusions to it being like life stopping. “It’s hard when you’re used to working and you go somewhere where you can’t use your skills, you’re just...it’s like your life has stopped. That’s how it is at the moment” (E750). This was seen as preventing the ability to think about the future and make any plans. This situation was likened to being put in ‘cold storage’, often due to the age of most asylum seekers during a period in which people are usually building their careers. “We are not allowed to work, this is the bad thing for us....for they give me status after eight years, its means during these eight years it means like you did nothing and you lost your age also....for a lot of people when you were in your thirties is the time when you’re starting to build your career, so for you, you weren’t allowed to start a career” (E752). Another added that “it’s not easy to just sit and wait and do nothing. Although even now it’s very difficult because it’s not easy to find a job at this time as well” (E751). Another talked about the feelings of rejection resulting from not working. “It makes you – I don’t know how to say that – is it rejected?...Just useless yeah. As the time passes, you just get used to being unemployed”, but that “if you know the benefits of the work, you try hard to get back to work because it makes your life.... Valuable, it makes your life more valuable” (E536).

The enforced idleness with regard to work was also seen as having a negative impact on children, and parents struggled with the reality of not being the role models that they hoped themselves to be. "You want to be like an example for your own children. Sometimes it's really hard for them because when we were back home, we were working for them and now here, we just sit around with them. They really don't know what's happening and we are just like nothing" (E750). One professional told of how her children laugh at the prospect of following her profession. They see her and her partners study as a waste of time due to the struggles she has had in trying to access such employment.

Age was also seen as a major barrier for a number of interviewees. One allied his age and his 'foreignness' to his lack of employment, but did not locate problems he was having in accessing the labour market as being due to discrimination. He stated that "I am a 49 year old man, 49 year old foreign man whose first language is not English, they can be really hesitant to hire people like me, you know what I'm saying....if you were an employer, would you hire an old man like me rather than a young Scottish native people" (E541). There were, however, some feelings of discrimination. One respondent told a story of 'British' people getting preferential treatment, making finding work at a time of high unemployment even more difficult. "You look into the things, a job comes out and you apply. Sometimes you don't get an answer. Sometimes when you get an answer, they tell you that oh the man responsible is no longer here, but the advert continues in the machine, you see. Sometimes when you go for an interview, you come thinking that you have done well, only to hear that you have not been successful. And by my personal findings, it would appear there are more Britons unemployed for particular jobs, and you cannot get that job, where there's a Briton looking for the same job and is unemployed. I think that is what I've seen" (E382). The economic downturn was also mentioned by other respondents. "Everywhere is barriers and hurdles so, if the person is a fresh one, how can he get one when experienced people can't find any job" (E35).

This search for work was also raised by a number of other interviewees, including many whose English was very good and who had high skill levels. "Before I was applying in many, many. This is what disappointed me really, because I can't find any job. I applied in many places, even kitchen porter, even cleaning. I can't find it. It's not easy" (E38). He went on that "20 applications a day, never get an interview. Never got any interview....why? I don't know exactly. Maybe I'm not very old in this country. I don't know exactly. Or maybe I don't have experience in the kitchen porter and cleaning stuff, because they ask about experience" (E38). This notion of a catch 22 whereby employment without experience is not possible but where lack of employment denies the chance to gain experience is a key

problem for refugees and replicates issues raised in research about unemployment among young people<sup>15</sup>.

The struggle to find employment also led to suggestions of moving away in the search for work, obviously easier for single people than for families. In Survey 1 ten respondents said they would consider moving to find employment. In Stage 2 interviews just one respondent raised the possibility of moving away to find work. By the time she was re-interviewed in Stage 5 her views had changed. While still unable to fully access the labour market she now felt more settled, had some connections and did not want to start again elsewhere. Thus mobility is not a simple solution to employment even in situations where opportunities are available.

In Stage 5, E185-2 was quite explicit that the biggest barrier to him finding work was his lack of social networks, a feeling supported by the number of interviewees who found work through developing networks. While he eventually found employment through word of mouth he felt this was partly down to luck, which was not considered to be a good basis on which refugee employment outcomes could be improved. He also made mention of the problems of temporary housing. However, for him the problems associated with temporary housing were small when set against the ability to stay in the same area, meaning that nascent networks would not be lost. This issue of employment networks is widely regarded as important to employment and the lack of them is contrasted with their experiences in their country of origin. E432-2, for example, stated that "I keep saying that, where I come from, and I believe this is the same for everybody else, or most of the refugees, we still use the old system of personal contact".

In other follow-up interviews one respondent, when discussing how he felt on getting refugee status raised the issue of barriers to employment unprompted (E144-2). He started by talking of barriers in a very general way before being asked to focus on his own particular experiences and the barriers he felt that he had faced. While language was not a barrier for him due to English being his second language, he felt that among his refugee friends, this was the most profound barrier to employment. His main personal barriers were educational and housing related. With regard to education, this man felt that both a lack of knowledge of how the British educational system works and a degree of ignorance on the part of British employers and institutions regarding the validity of qualifications from other countries made both initial employment and up-skilling difficult. The other issue was that of living long term in temporary accommodation. Almost all new refugees face an initial period of homelessness,

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<sup>15</sup> Sissons and Jones Lost in transition? The changing labour market and young people not in employment, education or training  
[http://www.theworkfoundation.com/DownloadPublication/Report/310\\_lost\\_in\\_transition%20\(2\).pdf](http://www.theworkfoundation.com/DownloadPublication/Report/310_lost_in_transition%20(2).pdf)

which leads to many living in temporary accommodation. For him, living in a homeless hostel affected both his drive and the way he felt employers viewed him. “I’m thinking I’m alright now, I’m free, I can go out and look for a job, I can be independent”, but that “you find yourself trapped”.

The issue of employers’ perspectives of newcomers was also raised by another man with very good English language skills but who had lacked confidence somewhat with regard to using those skills due to his experiences of employers. He felt that employers assumed a lack of intelligence among people who do not speak ‘perfect’ English, or who speak English with an accent (E8). This view was raised by other interviewees also, whereby an assumption of lack of intelligence is felt on the part of employers.

### Employment types

For those who were working at Survey 1, we wanted to gain an understanding of both the type and nature of their work. Among those working, respondents were concentrated within low paid and low status jobs. Indeed many were working restricted hours in casual jobs, often on zero hour’s contracts. However, even for those working full-time or thereabouts, (10 respondents worked over thirty hours each week), pay levels are low. Only two people earned over £15,000 a year. This means that a number of people working over thirty hours each week earn between £10,000 and £15,000, while the indication is that three are working over thirty hours a week and are paid less than £10,000 each year, below minimum wage levels.

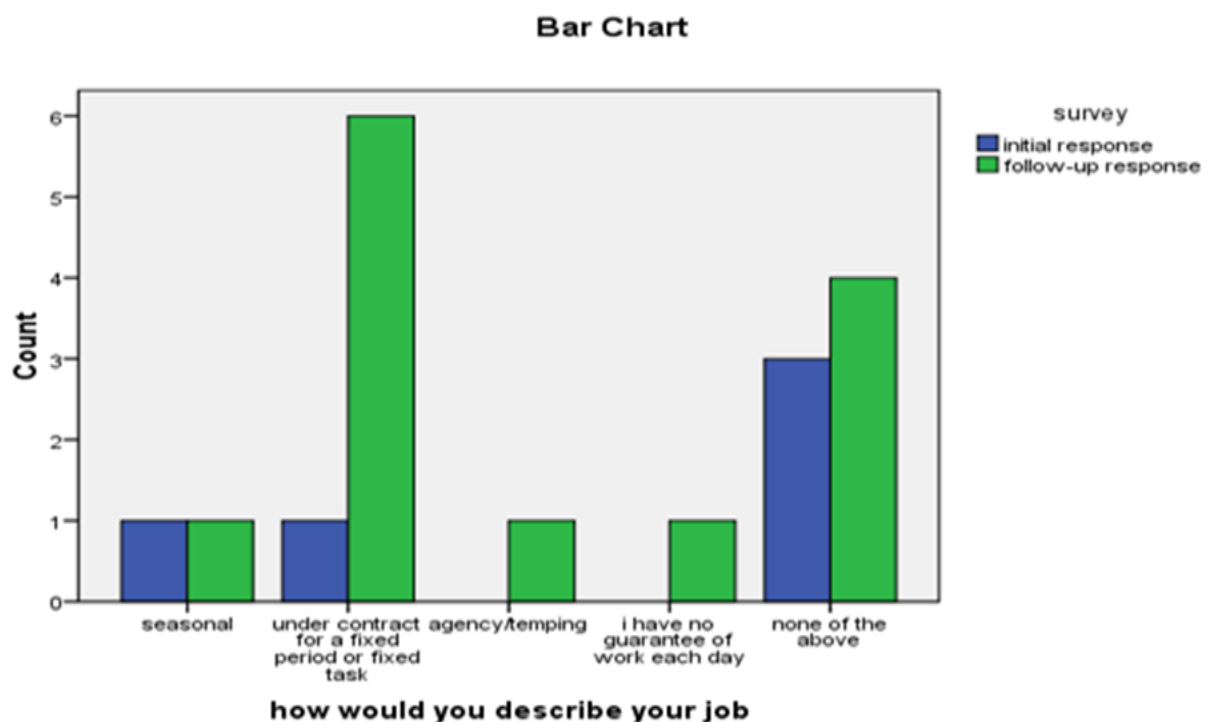


Figure 9 – type of contract of employment

The lack of secure work is also of note. Very few of those working indicated that their employment was secure. This compares to 93% of people working in the Scottish population in the Scottish Social Attitudes Survey in 2010 who said that their job was permanent. We then asked people who were working to give us their job title and the results confirmed that those working were often in fairly menial or low skilled jobs. These included care assistant, cleaner, security officer and waitress. We also asked respondents if they had worked in their country of origin, and some 71% indicated that they had done so. When the work people are currently doing is compared to the range of occupations people indicated that they had done in their country of origin, it was clear that there are high levels of underemployment. For example, a woman working as a cleaner used to be a teaching assistant, a waiter used to be a chess teacher, a few care assistants used to be teachers, a person working in DIY used to be an engineer and a postal worker used to be a silk screen printer.

Thus for those in work, skills are still not being used and employment is concentrated in low paid, often menial work. One woman talked of her husband who was an accountant in their country of origin who was effectively working zero-hours contracts in low-skilled work. "He is working at the moment, but he works on a part-time basis. He works for one day a week" (E279).

Another talked of his skill set, particularly regarding languages, which had led him to believe he would be able to get a call centre job. "I can speak Arabic, French, English....you can see yourself you have the skills as you say, languages etc but you cannot find a job. Sometimes you see yourself as lost, but this is life you know" (E536). For this man the lack of employment was seen as negatively impacting on broader integration due to the lack of feeling of belonging resulting from inability to feel that he was contributing as well as a lack of resources to socialise with people.

Another had registered with a large number of agencies and got semi-regular work through one agency. However, there was no continuity and no planning possible due to the zero-hours nature of the work. "Sometimes you work five hours a month, or you work ten hours, I didn't work from September to March. I didn't work any hours. So you just wait, they phone you for five hours, ten hours or something like that....if you say all the hours you worked since you registered maybe less than 20 hours, that's from October, October till now. It's not enough" (E38). Another added that "I would say I like to lead an independent life, but at the present moment, it depends on how many hours you get....I'm ok with that but it's not guaranteed, anything can change any time" (E144). While sporadic employment had its own



specific problems in terms of planning and childcare, there was also the concern that Job Centre Plus were not flexible enough to adjust to non-standard forms of employment.

Despite the significant changes in labour market access in survey 2, employed participants remained concentrated in low skills and low paid work. All of those who had accessed employment had done so in relatively low paid, often insecure sectors of the labour market, with just 2 of the 14 earning over £15,000 a year.

**Table 4 – Employment Income**

<b>how much do you earn each year</b>				
		initial response	follow-up response	Total
earnings	less than £5000	1	7	8
	£5000-£10,000	1	2	3
	£10,000-£15,000	3	3	6
	£15,000-£20,000	0	2	2
	Total	5	14	19

Despite the low paid and temporary nature of the work that respondents were doing, levels of satisfaction with work were fairly high. This was confirmed across a range of employment satisfaction questions in Survey 1 and at interviews after Survey 2. It seems, therefore, that while aspirations for 'better' jobs remain, this does not have much impact in how people view their present work.

For those in work there are a number of issues with regard to skills. For many of our respondents in employment there were many skills not being utilised. While the type of work people were doing was not disparaged by respondents, and most in Survey 1 did not perceive themselves as being underemployed, 18 against 13 who did, in follow-up interviews with those in employment there was a widely held view that work was not challenging. One cleaner who used to be a teacher pointed to his vast organisational skills that he was not being able to use at present (E8-2). However, there was also a perception that many skills were transferable. This particularly referred to soft skills where one care assistant who used to teach felt that these people skills were useable in numerous types of employment.

### **Success in the Labour Market**

Follow-up interviews as part of stage 5 of the research project were thematic, with 6 conducted with respondents in work about both the process of finding work and the work itself. There were a variety of means by which interview participants had managed to access the labour market as well as large vagaries with regard to how present jobs were viewed against employment aspirations.

One example is E8-2. This young man had repeatedly attempted to find work by visiting Job Centre Plus and searching their computers and speaking with advisors there. He had received considerable support from organisations in how to write a CV as well as in interview skills but was consistently unsuccessful in even managing to get an interview for very low skilled jobs, despite having reasonably high skill levels in a number of employment sectors. Eventually he found part-time work as a cleaner by speaking with somebody at the University where he had also begun to do a science degree. His view of the job search process was both critical and nuanced. He recognised the difficult economic situation and felt that in such a situation newcomers were likely to be the most disadvantaged. However, he also felt that employment agencies and employers took a slight language issue as a sign of a lack of intelligence, this despite language skills of a level that enabled him to do a science degree in English.

He sees his future employment as twofold, while completing his degree and after graduation. In the near future he feels the employment process will be a smoother one due to the contact that he has made through his present job and due to having become more confident in speaking English, which he sees as an effect of being in work. Longer term he would like to use his degree, more on which below. This again points to the issue of networks, whereby contacts met through employment allows further employment related progression. Minus the initial networks of friends and contacts the job search is extremely difficult. Having connections was widely viewed as a requirement to both find employment and to progress in employment. "Before, I was at home, nobody know me. But now I know the manager and they promised me, 'yes, you have been with us for some time, and you know, if any opportunity comes in, you will get the job because we know you" (E8-2). Put simply, once in work it was considered easier to find work. The issue of language and confidence is also interesting. The fear of making mistakes and of subsequently having your intelligence questioned was repeatedly mentioned by respondents.

Another part-time cleaner had previously worked in a temporary job that he had enjoyed but that he had been told would not be made permanent due to its seasonal nature. He spoke enthusiastically of that temporary job, highlighting the importance of employment to both social contacts and to employment networks. He stated that "you meet a lot of people from a lot of backgrounds, so very nice. They have a good policy at that place; they have no racism, no bad swearing, no bad things at all. You are working together" (E144). He had managed to find both his present and previous jobs through word of mouth, despite having received widespread support from various employability organisations. A friend who worked for the company recommended him for a part-time opening, from which he had subsequently been promoted. He felt strongly that social contacts were absolutely key to labour market

success. However, he also felt that many refugees and Scottish people alike turn their noses up at certain types of work. “For me, it doesn’t matter for the job, but the problem, because they promoted and because of the way I’m working with people, that gives me lots of contacts. If they give more opportunity for that company, to help them, I will do it. I’m not, how can I say, I’m not ashamed to do it”. What is more, he felt that his present job made him more employable in a number of ways, particularly with regard to managing people in his promoted position as well as organisational skills, not to mention developing an employment record in the country. This participant also agreed with E8-2 regarding the importance of work in the development of language skills. He had worked in a number of voluntary roles initially and felt his confidence in speaking English rather than actual language abilities had benefitted significantly from this.

The other employment sector disproportionately represented in our sample is that of social care. One respondent had worked full-time as a care assistant after having spent considerable time volunteering in the same organisation prior to obtaining paid work (E110-2). She had managed to access this voluntary work through an employment support organisation. While volunteering she applied for many types of work but was keen on social care due to previous experience in that sector. She therefore described this job as ‘ideal’. Although her language skills appear to be good, she is doing ESOL classes at the same time as working full-time, the downside of which is that she feels she has little time to socialise and make friends. “Most of the time I’m going to school or I am sleeping” (Ibid). However, she felt that her language skills had significantly developed as a result of work. Longer term she saw herself getting more qualifications in order to access a ‘better’ job. However, the cost of doing so made this unfeasible at the present time. She was still attempting to send money to family in her country of origin on top of living on a low income so, for example, over £1000 for a Scottish Vocational Qualification (SVQ) was prohibitive. The reason for wanting this qualification was purely financial. “If you haven’t any qualifications you get every time you are getting minimum wage, you know, just £6 something. If you have qualification, you get some more money, starters from £8”.

Another social care worker also talked of the minimum wages that she is paid. She likes her work and sees it as allowing her to live a ‘normal’ life given the relative chaos of her past. She has worked in social care since shortly after getting status in 2009 but feels that this career path was not the result of a positive choice but of choices dictated by the economic situation which makes such work more abundant than the financial sector that makes up most of her employment history (140-2). Finding work had increased her confidence and made her feel she was making progress.

Support from employability agencies was discussed thus. “They train you if need be, and give you access to the internet if need be. They give you access to the phone if need be to make phone calls to prospective employers. They also give you advice on who would be best to employ you because they have a good history of the employers, the environment with Scotland or the UK” (E752). This advice, in common with other respondents, has some worrying implications, with skilled refugees being directed into low paid and low status employment. One respondent told of how his tutor had stated their unhappiness with the initial employment plans that he had which involved using his existing skills. This tutor then effectively directed him down the social care employment path. However, having received this support and advice to seek employment in the social care sector, she subsequently found her job from searching newspapers. After many applications, just getting an interview was viewed as a significant step forward. “When you are interviewed face to face then you feel more confident” (E140-2).

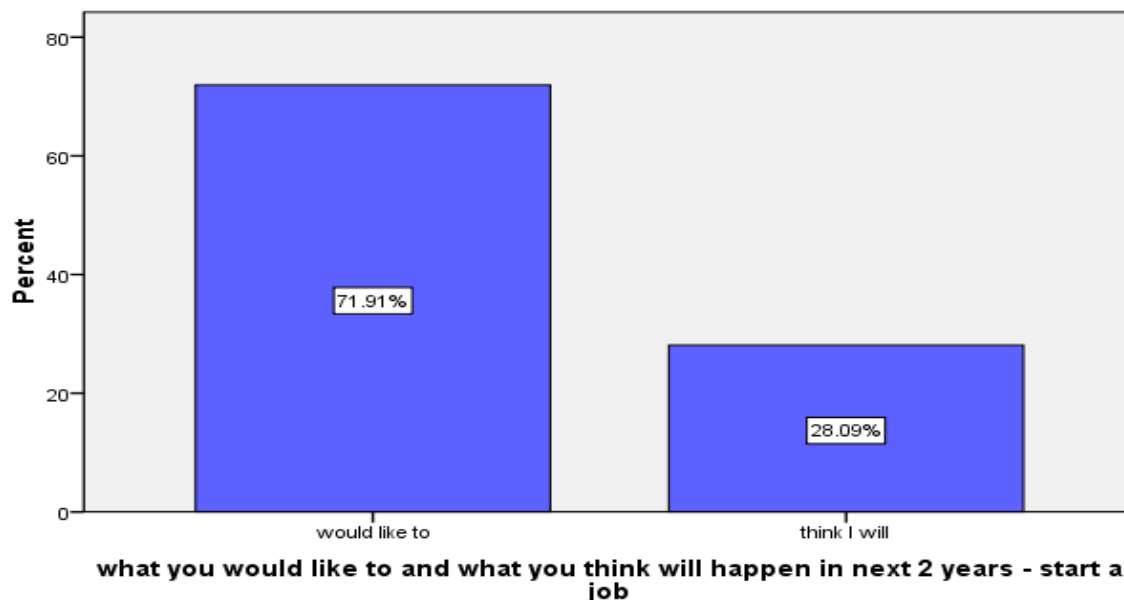
Another support worker had recently moved from a part-time job to a full-time permanent post. He had received support from a number of organisations which he felt had given him “directions of what decisions should I take to find myself. It’s a very strong and a positive thing to know the UK system, working system” (E144-2). Unlike some other respondents who indicated that they had received advice rather than direction, with regard to employment he stated that “they didn’t force me to take decisions but they advised and encouraged me to look in those things and how you pull things out”. Without this support, he felt that he would not have been able to access the labour market. He contrasted his accessing of support with friends who had opted out of such support who he felt were now struggling to find work. With regard to his previous profession, he talked of giving up on his profession and “found out it’s a bit difficult because I have to upgrade that and it’ll take me something like three or four years to do that”. Instead he was advised that jobs are available in social care and therefore short-term decisions were prioritised against longer-term career options. However, this man also talked of the support being necessary with regard to what to expect in the job search process. He particularly mentioned certain questions that are routinely asked in interviews in Britain that would be treated with suspicion in his country of origin.

### **Employment Aspirations**

In Survey 1 respondents indicated that their employment aspirations in most cases were not reflected in the work they were doing, and even in the types of work people were looking for. What is more the expectations people not in work had with regard to accessing any employment were in marked contrast to their desires to access that employment. Just 28% of respondents were confident that they would be able to access paid employment within the

following 2-years period despite an overwhelming desire to do so, some 72% of whom responded as much.

**what you would like to and what you think will happen in next 2 years - start a job**



**Figure 10 – Employment aspirations and employment expectations**

Linked to the giving up on using specialisms, aspirations changed in many cases to reflect this lack of optimism. One woman said “To make life better, yes...I told you that my husband is a doctor here, and also I’m working hard to pass my exams and work as a doctor here as well. But, he’s been out of work for three months now, and, how can I say, jobs are tight here, and...like the future for us, for me and for my husband, as doctors, is bleak or...not so certain” (E535). This was all leading to many respondents giving up on their specialisms. One woman talked of her and her husband being computer programmers in their country of origin but that they have both started to look at cleaning jobs (A14). Another who was an adult literacy teacher had applied to do a social care course (E108). Giving up on using existing skills was also partly determined by assumptions about available employment. “What I am saying is we have to look for jobs where there are jobs available”(E137).

Many people simply considered their skills to have little utility in Scotland. “I spoke with some people, some friends and I found it sounds very good job here, this job that I had in Iran, drawing map, it’s not very good here and it’s not a lot here, because in Iran it was a lot and everybody tried to make building by themselves, and they need this all maps and plans and everything. But here it’s very different and I heard it’s not very good. That’s why I...I’m thinking about social care” (E529). This word of mouth regarding employment matters is important, but there is the risk of the wrong information being provided if it is not being

delivered by experienced professionals with an in-depth knowledge of labour market issues. There are many skills that are transferable and rather than giving up on using those skills completely there may be ways where some can be used in different types of employment.

Respondents were often acutely aware of the economic problems in the country and in some cases were adjusting their aspirations accordingly. One woman stated that “I have experience in banking, it wasn’t such a good time or climate, good time to go into banking....because there was too much redundancies going on within the banking sector” (E140). She went on that “we try to adapt to whatever is available. And we also see that even children of this country have, even if they’ve gone to universities, the students register for the same jobs in the care industry, but they are qualified to do much better jobs than that.....they’ve had to think of the care industry because that’s where the employment is”.

The perception of current employment being short term on the part of the employees was reflected in discussions in Stage 5 of the research. None of our follow-up interviewees in work saw their present job as the job they would seek to do in the long term. Some were trying to enhance their skill set while others planned to advance within their present job and/or with their present employer. Many interviewees planned to simply look for jobs that paid more than minimum wage levels regardless of what type of employment that was. However, there was felt to be something of a Catch-22 situation whereby in order to obtain better paid employment, UK based qualifications were required, and yet minimum wage pay levels do not provide enough spare finances to pay to get those further qualifications.

The participant doing a science degree not surprisingly did not see himself working in cleaning jobs in the long term. Having not been successful in finding work that used his existing skills, also science based, during his time in the UK, he was adamant that his newly acquired skills and qualifications would be utilised to the full. In the meantime he is trying to find employment that will be more conducive to his studies. Rather than working 3 hours each day either before or after university courses. Instead he wanted to work the same number of hours but in a concentrated block at weekends (E8-2).

Another man believed he would work his way up in his existing job to a promoted post. Describing himself as very ambitious he stated that “whenever I start a career I don’t say because I’m getting paid now I’m happy there....within a year I have to make sure I improve something within that criteria....by setting goals I’m working with these people but I know I deserve more than that. But it’s not about them, it’s about me pushing myself on the ladder” (E144-2). He wanted to pursue this career for his own self-worth but also to be an example to other refugees in Scotland that labour market success was possible. “I feel like I’ve got a

responsibility to go back (into refugee communities in Scotland) and tell people or encourage people who are down there and say, 'ok guys, there's still a life there....I'm not saying follow me or do as I do, but it's a good thing to express myself to tell people about the good things we can get. You can achieve'.

### **Case Study 2**

E144 is a man from East Africa who was recognised as a refugee in the summer of 2009, having been in the asylum system for three months. He was a teacher in his country of origin but the time it would have taken to be able to teach here dissuaded him from pursuing his career here. Four years seemed too long for him to wait when he was keen to start working as soon as possible. E144 has done a considerable amount of voluntary work and feels that this is where he learnt about 'UK working culture'.

He also found out about the labour market here from advice support agencies. This led to him doing an SVQ which allowed him to get a job as a part-time support worker. At the time of survey 1 he felt that he would be able to develop within social care. He talked of being on the first rung of the ladder but was confident he would continue to climb that ladder. In that regard, between survey 1 and interview 1 he had completed his SVQ2 which he was confident would allow him to get a better job. Although he feels the advice received led to him deciding on social care as a job he was adamant that he was supported rather than directed in those choices. He feels it is important to go where the jobs are.

By the time of survey 2 E144 was working full-time and felt more free and independent than he has for many years. His full-time employment was found via his part-time work. He feels he has a number of transferable skills that he is using in his present work. In particular some of the social skills used in teaching have been used in his social care work. Although he likes his work he points out that despite high levels of skills allied to this voluntary work, he remains in minimum wage employment.

Future career plans are limited by two things. The first is the relative lack of vertical movement that is possible within social care, meaning minimum wage work is difficult to move out of. The other limitation is the five-year review of his immigration status. He is worried that his employment prospects will remain static until he can secure his permanent status here, and he is unsure how he will find out about the five-year review process when the time arrives.

### **The Benefits of Employment**

There are obvious financial benefits to people from accessing employment, although perhaps not as clear as might be thought due to the important issues of low pay and associated in-work poverty (more on this in the next section). Nevertheless, we were keen to find out from respondents what non-monetary benefits they had felt as a result of being in employment.

Employment was seen as reducing social isolation among many refugees. One stated that "when you are allowed to work then you'll be able to move, meet people, have friends, you know. At times you will be happy, you find that you have someone to turn to, someone to talk to" (E58). However, the knock-on effect of this was that the lack of employment led to shame and often made friendships difficult to make and sustain. "There are some few who

embrace us very well. I have a friend, Scottish, he's like my...I'm a single boy but he's like my father, doing much for me, and he has been pressing I want to introduce you to my wife and family...let us go for lunch to my house. I tell him inviting one for lunch, sometimes it indicates that you're equal, you can only invite an equal for lunch in your house. But look at me, I'm down there, going to it with your family, we're having lunch at the same table, I'm jobless...no, just wait, such a time will come, let me see if in time, I can say fully integrate myself in society by getting a job" (E382).

For one woman the nature of her work, 12-hour night shifts in social care, meant that she had established her employment history while maintaining a routine that allowed for a good work-life balance, particularly important due to her having children. "When they are at school I'm at work. When they are at home, I'm at home. When they are off, I'm off"(E140-2). This was having a positive impact on her existing mental health problems, providing her with the boost of feeling she was being useful to both society and her family. The benefits of a good work-life balance was added to by being able to send a small amount of money to family in her country of origin, enhancing her feelings of usefulness.

One issue mentioned by many respondents was the fact that work was having a considerable impact in the development of language skills, not only in terms of practice but also in relation to learning accents. The benefits of communication went beyond language though. "The fact that you are meeting new people is a good point for us to build our...to be open minded" (E185-2). This process of learning how to live in a society by more direct links and contacts with members of that society pervaded the narratives of many interviewees across a range of issues. There was some notion of acculturation in the views of many respondents who had never questioned some of their own beliefs and practices but who felt that as a result of such questioning they were now become more open-minded.

Another common issue raised, partly due to their being from nations with no social security safety net, was the desire not to feel that they were reliant on the state in a form of institutional begging. This perspective was also tied into a desire to feel useful and to contribute, which was widely viewed as good for peoples self-worth. This had both internal and external aspects as the feeling of being useful by sending money to family in countries of origin was also raised by many respondents.

## **Finances**

Financial betterment was related in all cases to employment. One respondent said "I think it will be easier if...right now, I'm in the process of registering myself with a translating body also. Yeah, so if I get that sorted, our life will be much easier" (E536). This optimism that



work would fundamentally change financial situations is questioned by the issue of in-work poverty, more on which below. Another stated that among asylum seekers the whole future was seen as being determined by their asylum claim. One said “if you have a positive decision you are allowed to work, you can do everything you want. Yeah, it can change” (E460).

As mentioned above, the link between employment and financial progress is not necessarily a clear one. Nevertheless, financial concerns for all asylum seekers and refugees are a key issue with regard to how they are able to rebuild their lives in Scotland. We investigated respondents’ financial situation by asking how they would describe their present household income. The figures shown in Table 5 indicate that many people are having some difficulty coping on their present income.

**Table 5 – Feelings about finances**

<b>How do you feel about your present household income</b>	<b>Percent</b>
living comfortably on present income	<b>5.5</b>
coping on present income	<b>26.1</b>
finding it difficult to cope	<b>37.7</b>
finding it very difficult to cope	<b>30.7</b>
Total	<b>100.0</b>

Overall, almost 68% of people who answered the question indicated that they were finding it difficult or very difficult to cope on their present income. While the overall figures are similar by status, that is two thirds of both asylum seekers and refugees say that they are struggling to cope financially; this masks the severity of struggle. 43% of refugees say that they are finding it difficult to cope, while 43% of asylum seekers state that they are finding it very difficult to cope. There were slight differences in terms of how people felt they were coping financially by gender. While large proportions of both men and women were finding it very difficult to cope on their present income, 32.9% and 30% respectively, a further 40% of women and 32.9% of men stated that they were finding it difficult to cope on their present income, meaning that some 70% of women and 65.7% of men were to some degree struggling to cope financially. Just 3% of women and 7.6% of men felt that they were living comfortably on their present income.

The Scottish Household Survey gives the following results. This indicates far more financial difficulty among our sample than among the general Scottish population.

**Table 6 – Scottish Household Survey on financial struggle**

	All	Male	Female	15% Most Deprived
Manages well	49%	53%	44%	31%
Get by	39%	37%	41%	46%
Don't manage well	12%	10%	15%	23%

Although the questions are somewhat different, the Household Survey results would also indicate that refugees struggle financially much more even than the 15% most deprived in Scotland.

Questions on finances indicate a widespread struggle to make ends meet. One respondent gave a substantial breakdown of his costs. "They give us a hundred and two pounds every week, that's for both of us. So obviously my wife needs half of that, so I've fifty one pounds. So from the fifty one pounds that I have, and I'm responsible for things, I have to pay fifteen pounds for electricity, five pounds sixty for a television licence, five pounds a week for Council tax. So you might have twenty or ten pounds left to eat. You need to pay transport costs if you have to go somewhere. Also I still have my daughter in the Congo. She couldn't come with my wife because they were asking for one thousand two hundred dollars. So my wife and I have to save money to send so that my daughter can be supported there. So because of the living costs that we have and the support that we have to send for our daughter, we find it very difficult to manage" (E137). Another talked of the financial difficulties she faced that led her to 'begging' from friends. "When I was on a Jobseekers Allowance, the government is paying for my rent, my council tax, that's why. I have to pay for my electricity, I have to pay for my gas. I have to buy my food. I have to buy clothing. I have to send money to my children.....128 every fortnight. Quite impossible. What do you do? You beg among yourselves, you beg among your fellow members of the same community from. You beg, you literally beg, because you are scared to keep knocking on the door of government. Because they tell you, as far as we are concerned, we are taking care of you" (E140).

Despite financial problems, there were some respondents who indicated a gratitude for any financial support they received. This partly reflected the lack of support available in the countries of origin of respondents. "We have to do with what we have, you see. And we can't complain because we are...I can say, maybe because we are not from this country, but we have to do with what we are given"(E750). Despite that, the same individual did talk about financial struggle and its impact on children. "You can't...with children, children need a lot of things. They meet other children at school. They see other children have got such toys. I can't afford some of the toys they are talking about. So I just tell them this is what I can afford, you see" (Ibid). Another agreed, stating that "I think I don't want to say it's a small money because it's very good money for me that I don't have job, it's very helpful but I have to decide and change my idea about buying everything, for example of course I don't have a lot of things but I don't think about them in my situation, that's why this money is I say maybe number two..... Not comfortable life, not bad because it's very great from this government" (E529).

Many interviewees were quite sanguine about their financial situation. "I'm coping on the present income..... I have the power to cope! I just cope!" (E535). "There are things that you like to have but you just say when my circumstances get better, I can" (E536). One respondent felt that he would be financially ok if it were not for his desire to socialise. However, he was also in the situation where he could get financial support from family in his country of origin (E541).

Not surprisingly many of the financial problems that people identified were linked to either being restricted from employment or struggling to find employment. One said "if you are not working you see they give you this money, you have to pay electricity, you have to pay also the council tax and if you make some mathematics there we see you are left maybe small money only just for eating. That's why we are pray keeping to say to the government to have the policy to the job creation like Labour did. So it means first of all maybe we start with the Scottish people and give chance to all the asylum seekers and to balance the market, that will be a good opportunity for us" (E752). The poverty trap, whereby available work would pay little more than benefits was also mentioned, as was the difficulty in working out such calculations. "If you don't get people explain to you what's going to be the difference, it's going to be...you might end up choosing the wrong choices..... Yeah and bills and all those type of things. Before you get into that part-time job, you must make sure you know exactly what's going to happen (E144). It is worth reiterating, however, that the vast majority of refugees simply want to work and for them no such calculations are made.

For many respondents finances were seen as meeting food costs and little more. One spoke of having one jacket, one pair of shoes and one scarf, and having to make do with that. He said money was just for food but that he was fortunate with regard to the proximity to the city centre, that he could walk rather than using unaffordable transport (E368). Another respondent referred to living 'hand to mouth', but saw this as a sacrifice worthwhile for the future of his children. "So just hand to mouth, not much, but because I put my head down that my children should stand on their feet, should complete their education, and they may get a job and then hopefully may just rid of these benefits. I'm not personally keen to get these benefits, but that's like who is below me and he might have more need than me" (E35).

Other effects of financial struggle were also mentioned. One man said he simply got used to financial struggle. He had responded by effectively living in just one room. "Only just my bedroom.....because I couldn't heat all my flat..... Yeah, I was just using my bedroom for everything, for studying, sleeping, even I was eating in there" (E153). There were also health

effects of financial struggle mentioned by some respondents. "Living on the £65 every week is not...it's very difficult to budget. For example .....I'm somebody who has blood pressure and the doctor wanted me to eat healthy fruit. Sometimes you end up eating what you can afford with the money because you can't...the food is very, very expensive and even to manage that money is very difficult and again even paying your bills is not easy. It's very difficult" (E751).

One lone parent talked of all of the money she had going to pay for things her baby needs. This made attending appointments both regarding her own health and the health of her child difficult. "Because, you know, my real problem is the baby. Because the baby is still using Pampers. My baby is asthmatic, yeah, so there are so many things where we don't seem to...you have to get the baby stuff. Before you know it the money is gone.... Home every time, because even if I need to go...I do go to Rape Crisis, and they have to refund my money, you know, they pay for the transport to here, and apart from that I don't even go out. If I do have something very, very important, if I need to go to my solicitor I have to walk from my house to the city centre just to save money" (E58).

Family also had other impacts on finances. For example, one man felt that he had been coping prior to the arrival of his wife. He now felt he was finding it very difficult to cope (E137). Another interviewee alluded to the costs of her maintaining contact with family in her country of origin. "Sometimes I run out of money. You need to have a phone. In my case I have children in (Country of Origin). And I should be able to call them. They need to be able to call me. I cannot afford this pay as you go phones, so I thought I'm going on a contract and those contracts will run into hundreds of dollars because you cannot tell me not to speak to my children when I feel lonely, when I miss them, the next thing I'm going to do is take the phone and call them.....When your children have got problems they'll beep you, you need to call back. They will not understand, even if they understand that you don't have money, but you are the parent, you are the only one they turn to. So it's not an option of oh I'm going to phone the next day. If they beep you there and then you've got to call them back" (E140).

Refused asylum seekers living on the Azure card<sup>16</sup> also raised a number of issues. Not only did the use of the card lead to embarrassment but there were also problems in accessing required goods, such as phone cards. "Some shops like, when the Home Office sent the Azure card they send a letter with the shops you can go to with the card. They put their co-

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<sup>16</sup> The Azure card was introduced in 2009 as a replacement for vouchers for refused asylum seekers on Section 4 support. Those supported via the Azure card still face most of the same limitations as the previous form of voucher support; cashlessness, ability to only shop in designated places and the stigma attached to the card remain major issues.

operative, but one day when I went there they said no, we can't take, we don't take this card any longer so it, you feel like embarrassed, you know. And some shops..... Sometimes, you know you have a phone, you can say I want a voucher to top up my phone, they say no.....So you don't have money to buy your, to top up your phone. We have, you might be with a person, so I don't know. We're supposed to phone someone, you're supposed to phone sometimes your solicitor, but they say no, you can't buy it. So it's not easy" (E460). Another stated that "Because before when I just started using the Section 4 that I used to get so humiliated in the supermarkets, like most of the till people are not told about it, so when you go to...I have even had to put things back because the whole of the people in the supermarket did not know about this card..... And another time I had to stand there because they were looking for the manager to ask him about the card..... I was really very scared, I thought maybe they were going to call the police on me. And there was a queue of people all looking at me like this, like I'm a criminal" (E279).

Looking at any financial changes among those responding to both surveys, with a larger proportion of people in employment, we see only marginal perceptions of financial progress. The numbers struggling to financially cope remain high.

**Table 7 – feelings about income in Survey 1 and Survey 2**

how do you feel about your present household income * survey				
		initial response	follow-up response	Total
how do you feel about your present household income	living comfortably on present income	3	2	5
	coping on present income	7	8	15
	finding it difficult to cope	9	13	22
	finding it very difficult to cope	8	7	15
	Total	27	30	57

On further investigation, only those working full-time indicate a positive change in how they feel about their financial situation, with 3 of 5 respondents in this category indicating that they were either living comfortably or coping. Nevertheless, this still indicates that 40% of respondents working full-time are struggling financially, highlighting the issue of in-work poverty. In addition, more than half of all respondents working part-time state that they are finding it difficult to cope, another important issue that combines low pay and underemployment. Among those working the impact of employment on finances was not always substantial. However, such money issues within the broader context of refugees' lives were treated somewhat prosaically. "Even if it's not I'm really satisfied this is the good money I want, no, because when I came here I didn't come for money but I came to save my life" (E144-2). The fact that there was so much optimism regarding the future among those working also impacted on views of the present. "I am happy at the present moment because I am still going on the ladder" (E144-2). This reflects the fact that expectations are not

unrealistic. One respondent highlighted what he considered to be his essential needs, a fairly modest perspective. “I’m doing fine. Little bit of debt but its ok. I can eat whatever I want to eat. I’m sharing a flat with another guy. I have a decent room. I have a laptop for my study. I’m doing fine” (E8-2).

However, others did highlight some financial struggle, particularly those looking after family. One woman spoke of doing a full-time and part-time job simultaneously in order to fund family reunion<sup>17</sup>. She felt she only managed to survive now due to Government support in the form of tax credits. There was also a view that minimum wage employment made progression beyond the present work type difficult due to not being able to afford to finance further study or up skilling and skills were not being developed within these minimum wage jobs.

The longitudinal nature of this project means that we asked about both past and future developments. We asked respondents how their financial situation had changed and how they thought it might change in the future. The first table indicates that a large proportion of our respondents feel that their financial situation has either stayed the same or deteriorated in the previous year. Results do not appear to be based on length of stay in Scotland as there is no discernible pattern with regard to year of arrival and whether someone’s financial situation has improved.

**Table 8 – Feelings about finances compared to a year ago in Survey 1 and Survey 2**

<b>Do you think you're financially better off now than you were a year ago</b>				
		initial response	follow-up response	Total
do you think you're financially better off now than you were a year ago	better off	6	5	11
	worse off	9	10	19
	about the same	15	12	27
	Total	30	27	57

Further to the issue of low paid work, it is evident that employment has had little impact in terms of how respondents view their financial situation. Twice as many respondents felt that in the previous year their finances had deteriorated than those who felt that they had improved, despite more people being in employment. The upshot is that optimism that their financial situation will improve in the next year diminishes somewhat, although over 40% still think that things will improve, compared to 57% in Survey 1.

<sup>17</sup> Refugees have a legal right begin the process of becoming reunited with their immediate family members. Although visa costs for those seeking to come to the UK as part of that process are waived, there are other costs such as immediate tracing of family members and often the cost of travel to the UK after having been found. For more see the report, “One day we will be reunited” Experiences of Refugee Family Reunion in the UK [http://www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk/policy\\_and\\_research/research\\_reports/research\\_reports\\_archive](http://www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk/policy_and_research/research_reports/research_reports_archive)

Looking at just those who completed the follow-up survey along with their responses at Survey 1 we see falling levels of optimism that finances will improve, despite the fact more people are in work at this point and that people expect to progress in employment. However, there is a split among respondents regarding their optimism, or lack thereof. Refugees on the whole were relatively sanguine about the future while asylum seekers believed that getting refugee status would change their future dramatically, in financial terms and otherwise.

**Table 9 – projected financial change in the coming year in Survey 1 and Survey 2**

<b>do you think you will be financially better off in a year</b>				
		initial response	follow-up response	Total
do you think you will be financially better off in a year	better off	16	12	28
	worse off	3	6	9
	about the same	8	10	18
	Total	28	28	56

## **Conclusion**

Employment has been one of the key areas of policy intervention with regard to refugee integration. Nevertheless employment rates remain very low despite an overwhelming desire to work among both those with and those without the right to work. There are significant barriers to employment that require attention, not the least of which are skills recognition and language development. This highlights the need for language support early in order that this barrier can be overcome quickly so that people can then develop at a relative pace. The lack of work history here also contributed to these difficulties. For example, a number of respondents commented on the demand among employment agencies for a work history in the UK. Where work has been successfully accessed it tends to be in low paid and insecure parts of the labour market. This means that fairly high skill levels in many cases are not being utilised and skills can subsequently become redundant or outdated. Nevertheless respondents remain optimistic that they will either access or progress in the labour market. For the time being though, refugees on the whole face severe financial struggle.

## **CHAPTER 4 - HOUSING AND NEIGHBOURHOODS**

### **Introduction**

Housing has been identified as a key factor in the facilitation of refugee integration and along with employment has been one of the main factors subject to a series of UK Governmental interventions in the form of both the Sunrise and Refugee Integration and Employment Service funding streams. There are major difficulties in determining what housing integration means however. Very low levels of home ownership when compared to the general population makes full comparisons with overall populations somewhat redundant and comparisons with specific declines of the population would perhaps treat refugees as more of a homogenous group than they are. How refugees feel about their housing and their experiences of that housing are therefore key to this chapter. However, as with all aspects of integration the basis on which people are answering questions is of the utmost importance. Therefore housing in peoples' country of origin was touched on in order to inform any analysis of the way refugees view housing here. The chapter then goes on to look at the issue of who owns the homes where respondents live, followed by length of stay in present housing. The chapter then examines responses around housing conditions and respondents' satisfaction with housing. This leads to a section on whether people would like to leave their present accommodation and if so the reasons for that decision. Next the section touches on the important issue of temporary accommodation, the link between views on housing and neighbourhoods and ends by looking at the issue of housing support, who provides support and how people feel about the support available.

### **Country of Origin Housing**

Views of housing are often influenced by respondents' history of housing in their countries of origin. Housing type and inequality of housing formed most discussion about these comparisons and intersected with the social class of respondents' prior to them leaving their country of origin. Thus comparisons that respondents make with housing in their country of origin there were in part determined by the status of individuals prior to having to flee. A number of respondents made reference to the class based nature of housing in their country of origin, whereby most people lived in poor and overcrowded housing while the wealthier lived in large well maintained homes (E750). Our respondents in many cases reflected both sides of this housing spectrum. Some talked of large and extended families living in small family homes well into adulthood with conditions and overcrowding highlighted as serious issues. For those who had come from comparatively well off families, the loss of substantial housing, to be replaced in Scotland by small high rise accommodation created some adjustment problems (A75). For others the concept of public housing was alien and this also created adjustment issues, although nobody expressed reservations about the benefits of



such housing. Many were simply not used to having housing support and in some cases had been unaware of access and entitlements until sometime after the point at which such support was available. Many respondents spoke of the severe overcrowding in homes that they had lived in in their country of origin. This informed their views of whether they lived in crowded homes in Scotland whereby they did not feel overcrowded in homes we would consider to be so, although there was a degree of acculturation in that in many cases they had now started to compare the size and conditions of housing to their perception of the Scottish population rather than to their country of origin.

Housing for asylum seekers is provided on a no-choice basis through the dispersal programme underpinned by the 1999 Immigration and Asylum Act. Glasgow City Council was the largest single local authority in Britain to take part in the dispersal process and as such has taken roughly 10% of all asylum applicants in the UK since the outset of dispersal in 2000. Asylum seekers did not have to take the accommodation offered but would not be entitled to any alternative housing should they refuse the housing offered. The vast majority of asylum seekers were dispersed to areas of low demand and social deprivation through a series of sub-contracts with social landlords, although contracts were also signed between UKBA and Y People, formerly YMCA, although contracts were also signed with private for profit companies such as The Angel Group.

### Home Ownership

The Scottish Household Survey finds that housing type is related to longevity of stay and perhaps not surprisingly, indicates significant differences in terms of housing tenure when compared to our sample, as some 66% of the Scottish population own the homes they live in, with a further 22% living in social housing, and 10% in private rented accommodation.

**Table 10 – Scottish Household Survey Housing types**

	Under a year	1-2 years	3-4 years	5-10 years
Owner	29%	56%	66%	71%
Social rented	22%	21%	23%	24%
Private rented	47%	22%	9%	4%

The low levels of home ownership among our sample means that responses are slanted towards shorter term housing occupancy as housing churn is higher among those who do not either own their homes or live in council housing. As the majority of respondents live in Glasgow and Glasgow City Council transferred their housing stock to the Glasgow Housing Association (GHA) a social landlord, the suggestion might be that refugees have relatively high levels of housing churn, as will be developed in the next section of this chapter.

Our respondents tend to be quite clustered in a narrow range of housing options. The broad responses to ownership indicate that Glasgow Housing Association is the largest housing provider among our sample, followed by Glasgow City Council through their contract with UKBA, since replaced by Orchard and Shipman under the new Home Office contract<sup>18</sup>. Table 11 Survey 1 responses have therefore undergone considerable change in the last year.

**Table 11 - Who owns your home?**

	Percent
GHA	29.4
Private landlord	10.9
YMCA	10.1
Angel	4.0
NASS/GCC	17.7
Temporary accommodation	9.3
Local authority housing	2.0
family or friend	6.5
other housing association	6.0
other	1.2
don't know	2.8
Total	100.0

That 9.4% of the overall sample, or 9.7% of refugees were in temporary accommodation is a cause for some concern and will be developed more later in this chapter.

### **Length of Stay**

The degree of housing stability can have a major impact on both how people feel about their housing but also on views of their locality and neighbourhood, highlighting the connections between housing and community, both relating to specific and usually small spatial units. In Survey 1 we asked how long people had lived in their present homes to provide the context in which they were answering questions. The results were also important in providing a sense of housing churn and show quite large numbers of people were relatively new to their accommodation.

**Table 12 – Time in present accommodation in Survey 1**

	Percent
less than 6 months	27.5
between 6 months and a year	21.2
between 1 and 2 years	17.8
more than 2 years	33.5
Total	100.0

<sup>18</sup> In 2012 private outsourcing firm Serco won the contract to provide support, including housing, to asylum seekers in Glasgow. The housing part was taken over by Orchard and Shipman, a national housing provider who would take over some housing units from Y People while also seeking others.

Not surprisingly the length of time people have been in the country has a major impact on their response to this question, with people who have been here longer tending to be more settled in their present accommodation. Nevertheless, in each year of arrival since 2005, over 40% of people answering Survey 1 had lived in their present accommodation for a year or less. There were no significant gender differences in this regard. However, there was some divergence among those who have children, with longer term stay more common. Indeed, over 40% of respondents who had children indicated that they had been in their present home for over two years.

**Table 12 – Time in present accommodation in Survey 2**

	Percent
less than 6 months	<b>12.5</b>
between 6 months and a year	<b>21.9</b>
between 1 and 2 years	<b>15.6</b>
more than 2 years	<b>50.0</b>
Total	<b>100.0</b>

When looking only at respondents in Survey 2 we see that over 50% have lived in their existing property for more than 2 years, with 34% having been in their home for a year or less. What both results show is that there are relatively high levels of housing churn, although respondents tend to have lived in the same home for longer in Survey 2, perhaps suggesting a more settled population and a temporal dimension to housing stability.

### **Housing Conditions and Overcrowding**

Other research on refugee housing has indicated that the conditions of housing tend to be of variable quality, with some housing providers having a particularly poor reputation<sup>19</sup>. While the vast majority of our respondents did not raise the issue of housing conditions in responses to either Surveys 1 & 2 or in follow-up interviews, there were a number who did, with fifty-one people citing housing conditions as a reason for wanting to move from their present accommodation. The furnishing of housing was mentioned by a number of respondents, in both positive and negative ways. Some felt that the décor was good and the houses relatively well maintained (E750), while others felt that they had been given a shell which they, on very little income, had to gradually furnish. One spoke of having moved home 5 times in 8 years but had since moved into a nice flat, but one that had nothing in it. He managed to get a community care grant to provide carpets and a bed. Friends gave him plastic chairs and the rest, such as washing machines and other furniture would have to wait (E752).

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<sup>19</sup> Netto and Fraser (2009) Navigating the Maze  
[http://www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk/policy\\_and\\_research/research\\_reports/research\\_reports\\_archive](http://www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk/policy_and_research/research_reports/research_reports_archive)

For others the conditions of their properties were of huge concern. One man told us “the house we live in at the moment is hell. It’s in a pitiful state. There’s lots of dampness on the walls. There is water that’s leaking through the roof and there’s dampness in the bedroom. .... Damp started appearing last year in 2010. So I’ve been telling them about this dampness problem since May 2010” (E137). He had had regular contact with the housing provider about this but felt that his concerns had gone unheeded. The view that housing providers were unresponsive to any concerns or complaints was a fairly widely held one, particularly among those still going through the asylum process.

A related issue was that of overcrowding. We asked how many people live in their homes, how many children of various ages live in those homes, and how many bedrooms they have. The data shows us that of the 230 people who answered the question, the mean figure for size of household is 3.60. The mean figure for numbers of bedrooms stands at 1.94, meaning that on average there are just over two people for each bedroom in the homes in which they live. The ratio is slightly better for those with families, with a mean of 2.40 bedrooms for 3.90 people in a household. This points to some level of overcrowding, and indeed when the cases are looked at individually, there are a number of key issues of concern. There are numerous cases of 3 people living in a one bedroom house. While this may not be an issue for a couple with a child, many of these cases are a lone parent and two children. One case has six people, five of them under the age of 16, living in a three bedroom house, while another had six residents with three people under 16 living in a similarly sized home. The worst examples of overcrowding indicated from the survey are; a case where seven people are sharing a two bedroom home. This includes two people under the age of 16; a case where seven people, with five under the age of 16 and two under the age five, are living in a two bedroom home; and a case where eight people, including two under the age of five, share just three bedrooms. These overcrowding issues are supported by a Masters dissertation done in conjunction with Scottish Refugee Council regarding housing issues in 2011. This research found that refugees most commonly lived 3 people to a one-bedroom home and five people to a two-bedroom home<sup>20</sup>.

Scottish Social Attitudes data shows that the mean number of bedrooms per household across Scotland was 2.64, although it does not provide a mean for the number of people in those homes. Nevertheless, the following provides some indication and suggests that our sample live in smaller homes than the Scottish average.

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<sup>20</sup> In 2011 a Queen Margaret University student conducted a number of interviews looking at the housing journeys of refugees as part of her Masters’ dissertation.

**Table 13 - Scottish Social Attitudes rooms per home**

Rooms	2 – 9.3%	3 – 18.8%	4 – 29.7%	5 – 25.3%
Bedrooms	1 – 12.2%	2 – 26.6%	3 - 47.7%	4 – 10.7%

**Case study 3**

E137 is a man from central Africa who arrived in Scotland in 2008, getting refugee status 9 months later in 2009. Since survey 1 E137 has managed to bring his partner over to join him. Between survey 1 and survey 2 he also managed to obtain part-time employment and felt that his financial outlook improved as a result. In addition his language skills had improved to such a degree that while requiring a translator at interview 1, he was comfortable without at interview 2.

E137 has lived in the same property for over two years. Prior to that, while in the asylum process he had moved around a lot and had been moved three times in the year before getting status. The home he is now in is the first that has not been either National Asylum Support Service accommodation provided as part of the dispersal process or temporary accommodation on being recognised as a refugee. This relative stability has led to him feeling safer and more satisfied with both his home and his neighbourhood. However, he feels that the home is too small due to his partner now being here and he would therefore like to move. Surprisingly, despite indicating some satisfaction with his housing E137 also talked of the health problems that have emerged as a result of the conditions of his home. He talks of severe dampness that has contributed to health problems. His GP has written letters to housing agencies to that affect.

With regard to housing choice E137 felt that he did not so much have a choice as an option set against an unknown. He took the accommodation he was offered despite reservations due to the fact that he felt he would have to take the second offer which could well be worse should he have refused. At this time he was trying to bring over his partner and child and he was scared that they would be left with an unacceptable home as a result. Having not yet managed to bring his child here he is aware that he cannot plan for a larger family in the sense that he will not be able to move accommodation until his child arrives, which means he may have a considerable time in cramped conditions should they manage to bring their child to Glasgow.

Overall and despite concerns with the conditions in his home E137 thinks that housing in Scotland is well organised and preferable to those in his home country. While in his country of origin if you can't afford a home you are homeless, he is very grateful for the very existence of social housing here and sees them very much as a public good.

**Housing Satisfaction**

Despite some of these issues regarding overcrowding and housing conditions, there are relatively high levels of satisfaction with present accommodation among our sample, with over 50% in Survey 1 indicating that they were either satisfied or very satisfied.

**Table 14 - Satisfaction with accommodation**

How satisfied are you with your present accommodation?	Percent
very satisfied	<b>13.9</b>
satisfied	<b>39.1</b>
not sure	<b>16.0</b>
not very satisfied	<b>19.3</b>
very unsatisfied	<b>11.8</b>
Total	<b>100.0</b>

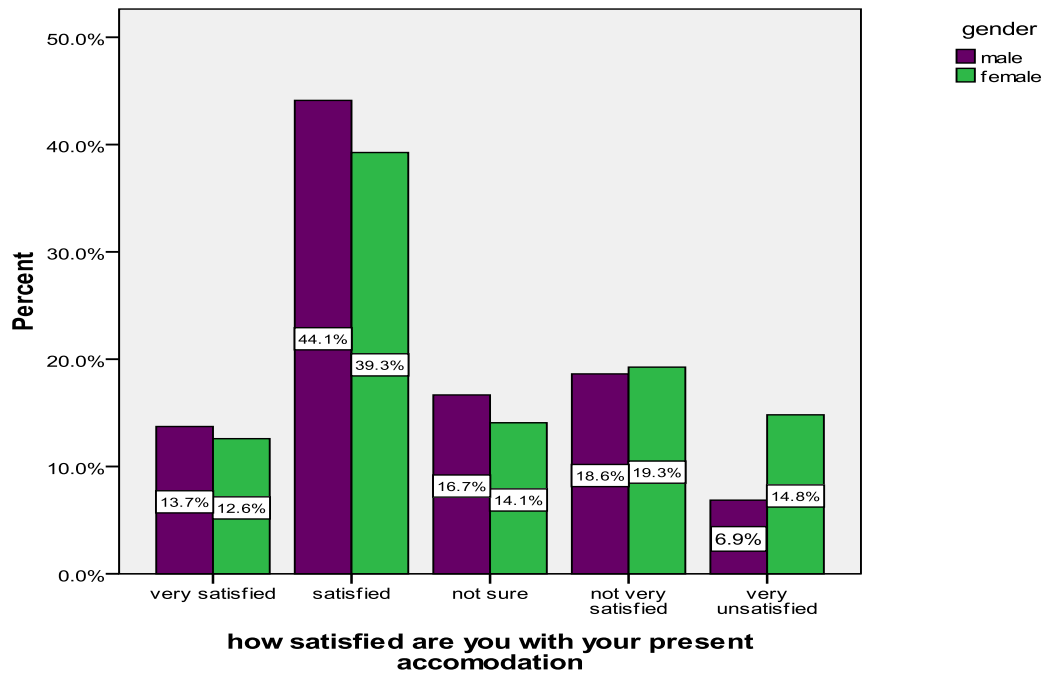
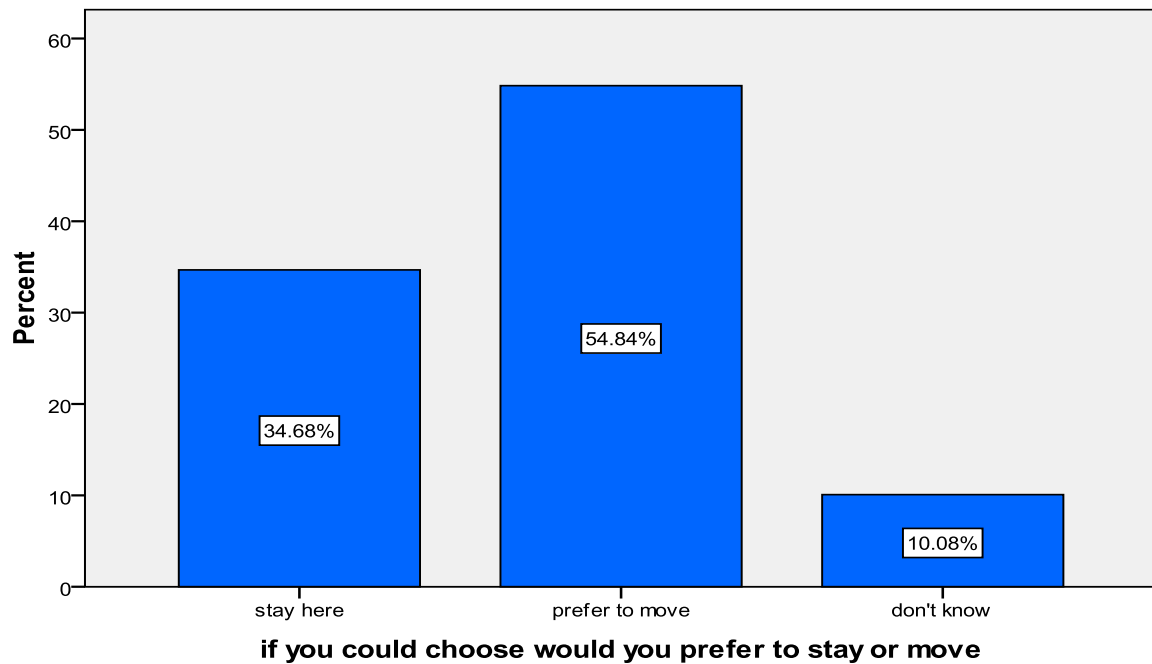


Figure 11

It is evident that the level of satisfaction with accommodation is lower among women than men. Furthermore, the level of satisfaction drops by almost 10% among women who have children, indicating that there is a relationship, although not a strong one, between having negative feelings about present accommodation and having children. In follow-up interviews it is evident, although perhaps not surprising, that these concerns did not result from families living in worse conditions than single people, but instead are due to parents wishing for better for their children than they would accept for themselves. Almost all negative comments about housing conditions concerned unhappiness with young children crawling on dirty floors and assumed health problems resulting from dampness and/or mould.

Somewhat paradoxically, despite the relatively high levels of satisfaction with accommodation, large numbers of our respondents in Survey 1 wanted to leave their present homes, almost 55% of the overall sample.

**if you could choose would you prefer to stay or move**



**Figure 12**

There was, however, a difference in the answering of this question by status, although perhaps not the difference that might be expected. Asylum seekers were less likely to want to move from their present accommodation than refugees, despite the fact that refugees have some element of choice regarding their accommodation. This goes against many of the assumptions that the research project would have made given what we know about asylum seekers views of the quality of their accommodation. That is, despite a known unhappiness with housing among asylum seekers, and a lack of choice for asylum seekers, they were less likely to want to leave their accommodation. This is in part due to some social support in their neighbourhoods, and partly due to the focus of those in the asylum process being entirely on that asylum process. It is only on being recognised as refugees that many people feel able to contemplate issues such as moving home.

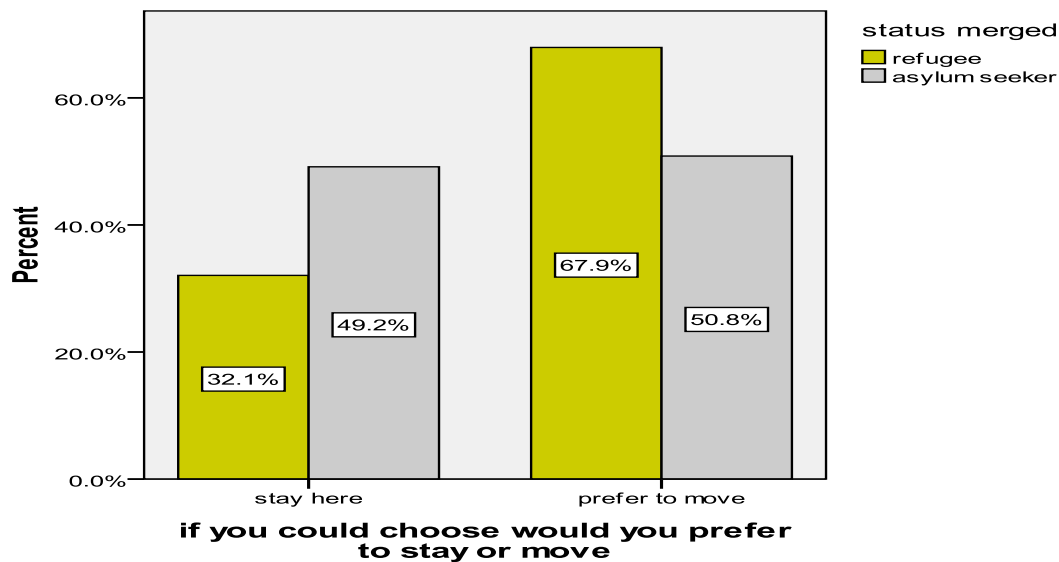


Figure 13

Stage 4 UK wide findings of the Survey of New Refugees finds that just over half of respondents would like to move home, similar to our overall figure but significantly lower than that found among the comparable sample, that of refugees, which shows that 67.9% of refugees would like to move home.

Table 15 - Survey of New Refugees desire to leave accommodation

Would you like to, or do you need to move from your current accommodation?	Percent
Yes, like to	20.7
Yes, need to	10.5
Yes, like to and need to	21.1
No	47.6
Total	100.0

There may be a number of reasons for the apparent anomaly regarding refugees and asylum seeker responses to the desire to move home. First, while people are going through the asylum process, their attention tends to be focussed on that process, with little additional energy to spend on other matters. This finding is replicated in the chapter on health. In addition, expectations may change according to status. This means that refugees would perhaps expect and strive for improved accommodation once their status is secure.

For those who indicated a desire to leave their accommodation in Survey 1, there were a variety of reasons given for why they feel that way. This was a multiple response question so respondents could give as many reasons as they liked for wishing to move home.



**Table 16 – reasons for wanting to leave present accommodation**

Reasons for wanting to leave	Frequency of Response
Size of property	62
Condition of property	51
For work	10
Type of property	47
For health reasons	26
For family reasons	19
Because of the area	39
Because of neighbours	12
To buy my own home	17
A different reason	15

The above table shows a wide variety of reasons for wishing to leave their present accommodation, with the physical characteristics of the property being the dominant group of issues.

There are a number of gendered dimensions to these responses. Women show a much larger propensity to cite the condition of properties as the reason they wish to leave their present home than men. 21% of men who indicated a desire to move home cited the size of a property as having such an impact, compared to 34% of women. Similarly, health reasons are cited by just 4% of men but some 18% of women.

There are also a variety of differences in responses by status. Overall, refugees outnumber asylum seekers in answering almost all questions in the affirmative in greater numbers. Size of properties shows the starkest contrast with 33% of refugees who wished to move home citing this as a reason compared to only 15% of asylum seekers. This might suggest that refugees have settled with their family or wish to move in order to prepare for the arrival of family while asylum seekers are more likely to be on their own. Preparation for arrival was something of a vexed issue. For example, one man hoped to move house in order to prepare for the arrival of his children. His concern was that he was unable to prepare for that arrival and should his children arrive he worried he would then quickly be uprooted. Both the area and the type of property show the opposite relationship between refugees and asylum seekers. That is, despite the overall slanting of responses towards refugees, asylum seekers outnumber them on those two variables, indicating that area and type of housing are particular areas of concern for asylum seekers.

In Survey 2, despite a large proportion of respondents having moved home in the previous year (45% of the total), just 25% of participants said that they would definitely like to stay in their present accommodation, with over 60% saying that they would rather move. Even looking at the matched responses, that is, those who answered both surveys, there is also a drop in the proportion of respondents wishing to stay in their present home, from 13 to nine.

21 people who answered the question in Survey 2 wanted to move house, while 15 had moved in the past year, meaning at least three people who have moved in the past year want to move again.

The reasons people gave for wanting to leave their accommodation were different to the reasons people eventually did leave. There are a variety of reasons for which respondents had moved home in the previous year. For some it was due to changed immigration status, with 4 of the fifteen who had moved falling into this category. That is, they were asylum seekers at the time of Survey 1 who had subsequently being recognised as refugees and granted leave to remain and so moved from NASS accommodation to some form of mainstream accommodation, or in many cases temporary accommodation. For others, all refugees, the move had been due to them vacating temporary accommodation having been in such accommodation from the point at which they were granted refugee status. Others still referred to the size of properties as being the primary reasons for moving. For some this was simply about getting refugee status and wishing to move from small cramped accommodation into larger family homes. Thus with refugee status often comes a change in expectations and aspirations. Others had managed to locate family members abroad and had either successfully traversed the family reunion process or had moved in preparation for such an outcome, although doing so prior to family arriving was fraught with difficulties. For a small number of respondents moving was primarily about local amenities. In particular, the distance of homes from local schools was a reason for moving home as well as for choosing which house was appropriate. "House is good but my children's school is very far and this is very difficult, one hour" (E657).

### **Temporary Accommodation**

A significant minority of our refugee respondents had experienced, or were still experiencing, temporary accommodation. However, the temporariness of such housing varied with some people in such accommodation for over a year. For one, having lived in temporary accommodation for two years, she was keen to stay in the same flat but have some security by making it permanent. "I don't want to keep moving again" (E751). Although not happy with the physical conditions of her home she prioritised her locality and local integration above these housing conditions. In addition, she felt that the conditions of the house could be improved should she successfully make it permanent.

There were a number of negative knock on effects mentioned by respondents as resulting from this long-term temporariness. "The house can be a barrier to get jobs because you know temporary accommodation is very expensive, and once I start working that house is too highly rented at £92 every week" (E751). There is a time lag therefore, whereby getting a

job leads to more expensive rent and time does not allow access to mainstream housing quickly enough not to produce a financial hit. Another respondent thought her temporary accommodation was adequate but that it was too far away from town. This means when she comes into town she will just stay there all day regardless of the weather as she cannot afford to travel back and forth and there is nothing in her locality to do. This added a sense of social isolation to other housing and community issues

A number of respondents were either temporarily or long term homeless. In such situations some individuals spent periods of time sleeping rough while others had the 'shame' of relying on friends. One asylum seeker spoke about a couple of periods of homelessness. "I've been homeless for a year and a half and one time six months..... I just shared with some friends; I have a lot of friends here that work in the community and my community so I have a lot of friends here I just share with different friends..... Sometimes it's difficult, sometimes the friends can't handle me anymore because of finances and people don't have enough money as well, people just get status and it's not working, there's not enough money" (E606). Another asylum seeker stated that "for the last year I hadn't any money. They took my accommodation six months ago, I have to sleep with some friends for a few days and then a few days with another friend. Sometimes I ask my friends for money, sometimes I spend all night with them for eating food. That's my life, which is not very good..... I'm not allowed to work, I don't have accommodation, I don't have benefits, nothing. I don't have any support from any... from no integration on that support, nothing. How can I survive? That's the question" (E681).

Homelessness isn't just an issue for those in the asylum process however. Those who had experienced homeless hostels relayed very difficult experiences and some stayed in such accommodation for over a year (E38). There is a systemic problem whereby a very large proportion of newly recognised refugees are made homeless due to overly tight timescales in the 'move on' period<sup>21</sup>. One refugee in a homeless hostel for a considerable period of time told us that there were inevitable problems between residents who in many cases were addicts and asylum seekers and refugees. "There's going to be a clash. And that clash being created by a misunderstanding or the type of life you are living. Those people are drug addicts. They've got a problem....they need to have help. But I'm not in that situation, my only problem to be I'm just homeless, I'm destitute only, but I am capable of doing anything, I'm capable of choosing, I'm not going to take drugs, I'm not going to have a friendship with those people. But that creates tension" (E144).

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<sup>21</sup> The 'move-on' period concerns the 28-days in which asylum seekers are expected to vacate their UKBA provided accommodation and find new homes and to access mainstream.

## Housing Choice

For those who are recognised as refugees, we were keen to discover how they felt about 'choice', whether they feel they had any housing choice and if they did, what they felt about their options<sup>22</sup>. One respondent felt that he had been given some element of choice but was reluctant to have to start his local integration in a new neighbourhood. Although not satisfied with housing, the conditions were seen as worth putting up with in order to remain in the neighbourhood. "We're well known in the area by now" (E536). The fact that he had three children in a local school also led to reluctance to take them out of that particular school, an apparent contradiction with the earlier view that poor housing is a particular concern for families.

Others also referred to having some element of choice. However, for some it was considered something of a Hobson's choice whereby the best of two bad options was taken (E33, A75). One man relayed, "Well, we didn't choose it. You're taken to see what's available and you're told that this is the only offer, the first offer, so if you don't take this then there's nothing else. Well, in fact you have two offers. They give you the first offer and if you refuse that, they give you a second one. If, after that, you refuse, then they don't help you anymore. So in effect, you have to accept the second offer..... I wouldn't have chosen to live there" (E137). With regard to the issue of choice one interviewee alluded to not knowing Glasgow well enough to have made an informed choice at the time he had to make such a choice (E144). Thus differing needs and misunderstanding of the system operated against harmonious living.

### Case study 4

E572 is a man from East Africa who arrived in Scotland in 2010. He has stayed in the same house for just over a year, having moved just before interview 2. Prior to that he had been able to keep on his NASS accommodation and therefore lived in that temporary accommodation for 18 months. He says the process of getting more stable housing was simple but that he lacked the knowledge to make informed choices. E572 has not received much advice about housing and that which he has had has been from a health related charity. He filled in a form of where he would be willing to live but thinks he didn't really know many of the areas he was asked about. He then waited for over a year before being made an offer. He saw the place and thought it was ok so agreed to take it but has since regretted that due to the area.

He feels that having some permanence has led to him feeling more at peace in his present home. That said, although E572 likes his home he would like to move because of the area. Until then he has been trying to furnish his flat on a very limited income and has relied on friends and charities to do so.

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<sup>22</sup> The vast majority of newly recognised refugees are made homeless due to the tight timescales of the 28-day 'move on' period. Once in temporary accommodation refugees in Glasgow are entitled to two 'reasonable' offers of settled housing by Glasgow City Council Homelessness Services.

## **Housing and Neighbourhoods**

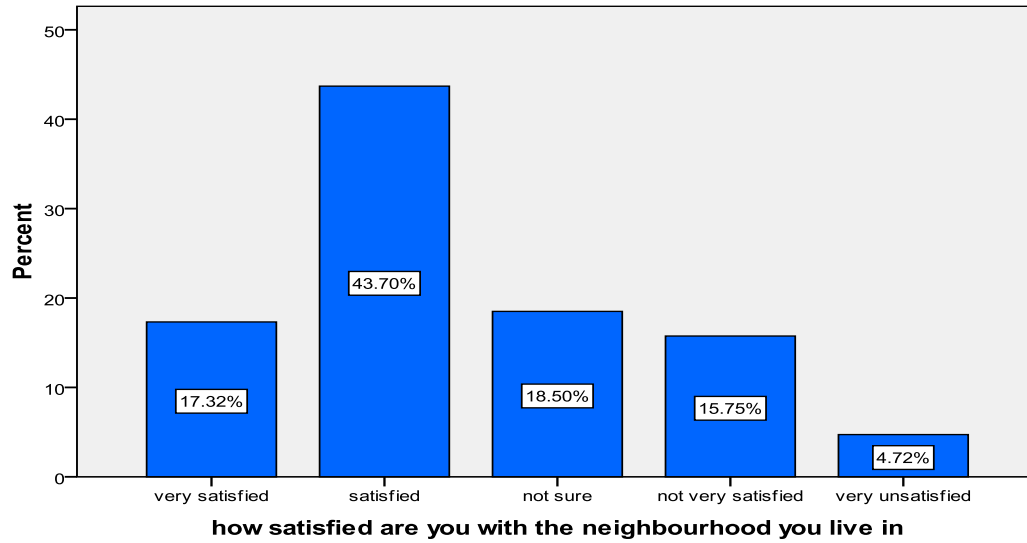
Many discussions about housing cannot be disentangled from feelings about neighbourhood. While some people appear to be able to separate the two, and view their homes as their sanctuaries within neighbourhoods, for many more the two are seen as contingent on one another. One talked of difficulties in his neighbourhood.

“There was two times or three times big problem for me about teenager people, you know. I made phone to police and report to police. Police came, you know, but too late.....I've been in Tesco and shopping, you know, just some plastic carrier bag, you know, and walk away to my home, there was eight or ten people, teenager, some girls, some boys behind me and tried to catch all my stuff, all the shopping, and all my shopping on the floor, you know..... And I just run away and try to call to police because that was not so far from my home, just a couple of minutes from it. I'm just very, very angry and just try to open the door and get inside, and one of them is ..... in the face, he said open the door, open the door. I said why open the door, you want to try to kill me [laugh], I'm not opening the door, I'm not stupid. And I tried to call to police. Police came, but late. And another time, a bottle of wine under my feet” (Far 27).

This was a particularly vivid example of harassment within neighbourhoods. However, he went on to say that he did not feel that this harassment was based on discrimination, that it was something people regardless of race experienced in his neighbourhood. Nevertheless, this made him very unsettled in his home. Another respondent also talked of the links between neighbourhood and housing. “The flat we're living, it's a very old flat and it's not maintained very well and there is crimes all the time. You see police lights everywhere. So I wouldn't want my kids to see that all the time” (E750).

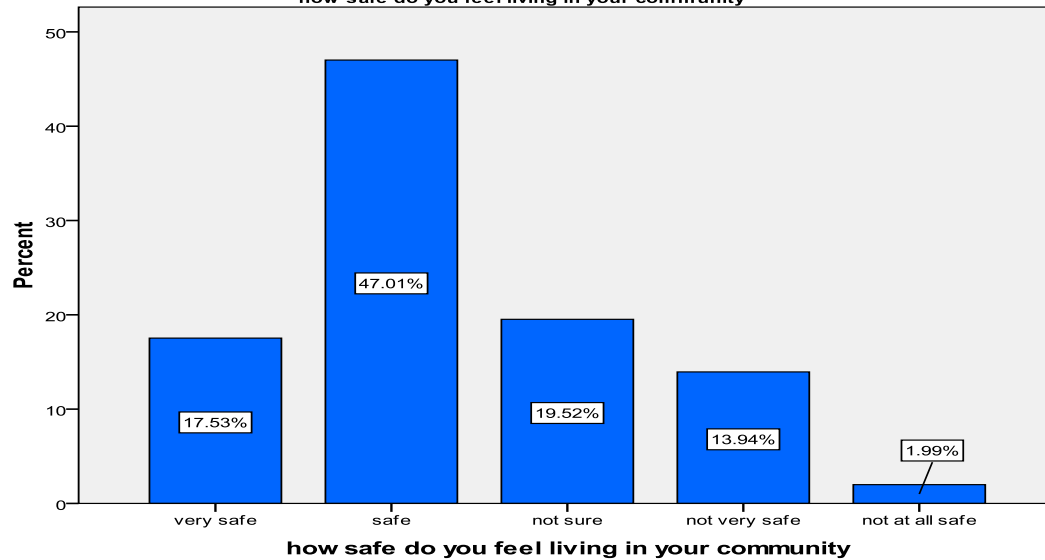
We followed survey questions about housing by asking how satisfied people were with their neighbourhoods, and also how safe they felt in those neighbourhoods. The overall figures are shown in the two tables below. These indicate both relatively high levels of satisfaction with the neighbourhoods in which people live, and also a high degree of feelings of safety in those communities.

**how satisfied are you with the neighbourhood you live in**



**Figure 14**

**how safe do you feel living in your community**



**Figure 15**

There were significant gendered differences in relation to these responses. While there were relatively large numbers of respondents indicating overall satisfaction with their neighbourhood, 66% of men and 54% of woman indicating they were very satisfied or satisfied, the levels of dissatisfaction are concomitantly considerably higher among women. 12.5% of men indicated that they were either unsatisfied or very unsatisfied, compared to 28.4% of women. There are no significant differences in responses between women with and woman without children. This finding is also reflected in the feelings of safety in their neighbourhoods.

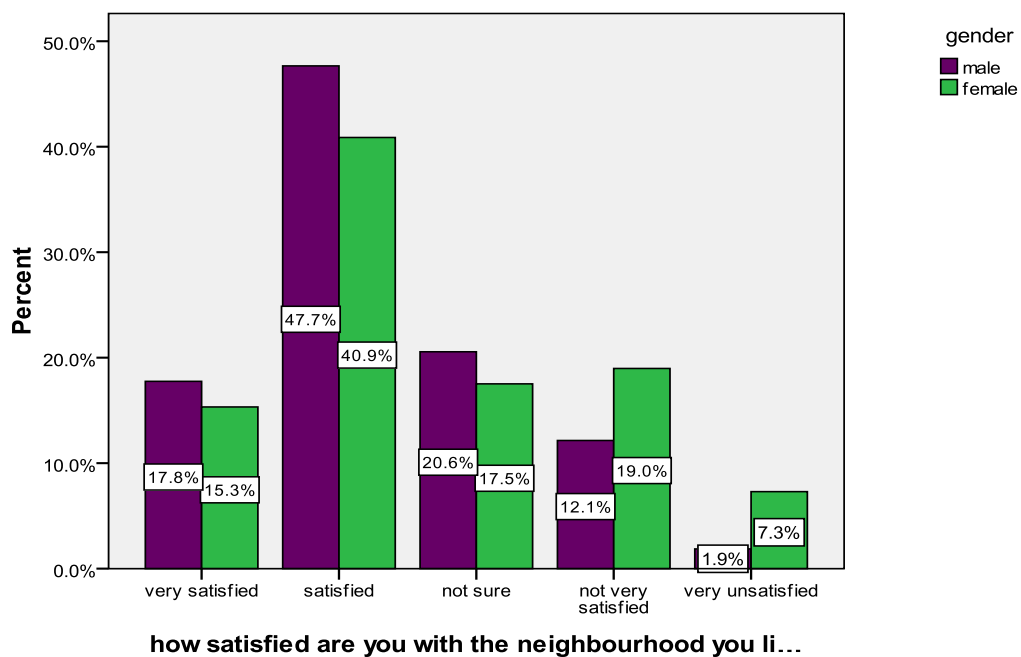


Figure 16

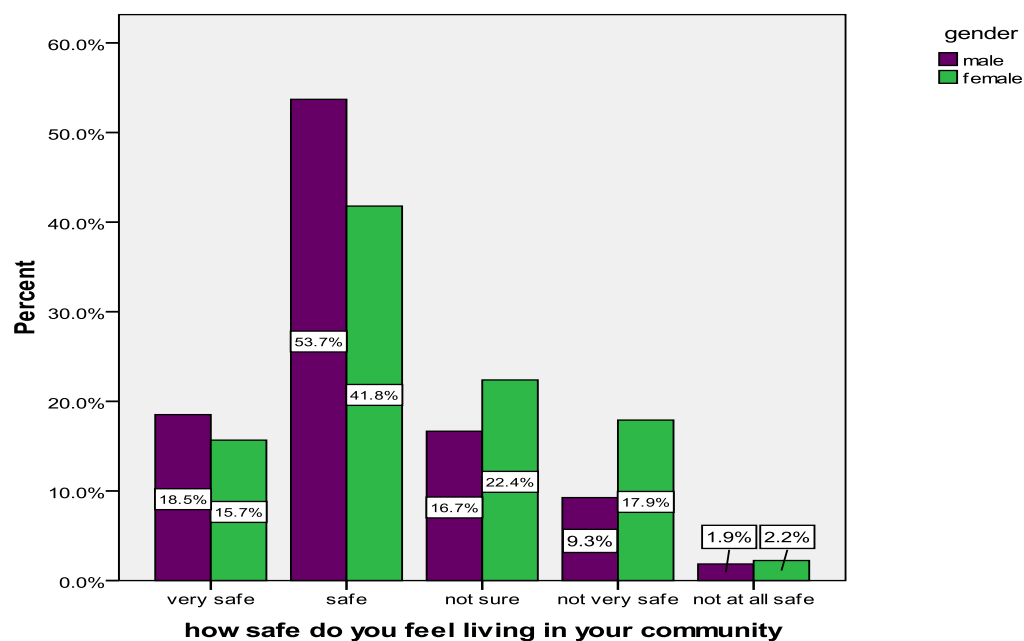


Figure 17

The Scottish Household Survey addresses this question slightly differently, asking how respondents rate their neighbourhood as a place to stay. The comparison is worthwhile nevertheless. It finds that 55% rate their neighbourhood as a very good place to live, and 38% as a fairly good place to live. Just 4.3% answer that their neighbourhood is a fairly poor place to live and 1.8% a very poor place to live<sup>23</sup>. Although our results show relatively high

<sup>23</sup> Data available from <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/16002/DataAccessAgreements>

levels of satisfaction with neighbourhoods, they also indicate that against the Scottish population as a whole, neighbourhoods are less highly rated among asylum seekers and refugees.

There was little difference in responses to neighbourhood satisfaction and safety in Survey 2. The Scottish Household Survey addresses the issue of safety in a slightly different way by asking about safety in relation to walking alone. It found the following with the gender dimension added. The results are relatively similar to our findings.

**Table 17 – Scottish Household Survey -Safety in Neighbourhood**

	All	Men	Women
Safe	75%	85%	66%
Unsafe	22%	12%	30%

We asked respondents to provide explanations about the way that they answered questions on neighbourhood satisfaction and safety. Many of the responses indicate relativity in how views are explained. Many respondents stated simply that compared to their country of origin they were satisfied and felt safe. Some went on to suggest that the lack of killings and bombings meant that they found their present neighbourhood safe. Others felt that their neighbourhood was friendly and so they felt both satisfied and safe. On the negative side, many respondents suggested that the prevalence of young people drinking and taking drugs has a negative impact on their feelings of safety. Others still suggested that high levels of racism in their neighbourhoods made them feel unsafe. Some of the comments below are indicative of the overall flavour.

### **Positive**

*'In Iraq I got threatened so I cannot work, live and express my life, ideas and opinions freely'*

*'Compare to my country where there is no security, I know if there is any problem I can contact the police or any other emergency services'*

*'Because back in Africa there was no peace at all'*

*'In comparison to Bagdad, great improvement'*

*'My neighbours are very good, the people I meet are very friendly'*

*'Good neighbours, my children have many friends, people in my community are so good. Do not feel that I am segregated. Found myself so many friends'*

### **Negative**

*'Because where I live there is much junkies, and I have problem with high flats. And I don't have any friends near me'*

*'It feels like a gated community'*



*'Not a few numbers of the surrounding neighbours are undereducated and unemployed (and not working) besides those heavy drinkers/addicts are jumping around. Though I haven't been in trouble with them yet I feel things are fragile'*

*'Am not welcome because I am not a Scottish'*

*'Neighbours use the F word to call use (me and my children), they broken my windows twice Just because some of the people are racists and they will harass for no reason'*

*'No friendly environment, we feel unwelcome, people do not talk to us at all so we feel lonely'*

## **Housing Support**

One of the additional questions asked in Survey 2 that was not asked in Survey 1 concerned housing support and advice. A variety of organisations had provided housing support and respondents were generally satisfied with the support they had received from those organisations. Nevertheless, the fact that so many people remain in homes that they don't want to live in creates something of a problem for both housing providers and for those providing housing advice. Those who were most satisfied with the advice they had received were generally relatively newly arrived and so they appreciated support in traversing the housing system in Glasgow. This suggests the need for early support for refugees in both understanding and orientating themselves around Scotland's housing system(s). It also suggests, however, that people are less satisfied after the point at which they feel that they have gained some degree of local knowledge. This links into the issue of choice and the fact that many respondents feel that they lack real choice regardless of the options presented to them.

## **Future Housing**

With regard to housing aspirations, while most of our respondents would love to own their own home, this was seen as impossible for most. One example of this is provided; "I want my own home, but I can't support them, because if I apply for the mortgage they say you put some 20%, 25% so how can I support it. I don't have it so I'm just waiting for the children to come out to find a job and then they can get a mortgage, because they are ages, my age is now nearly sixty, fifty-seven, fifty-eight, so my length of mortgage would be less, more instalment and they will be resisting to give me a mortgage, but they can get easily so they can then buy accommodation. As I said my wholly focus was that my children should get education" (E35).

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has examined a number of issues regarding the housing of refugees and asylum seekers, as well as a number of linked issues pertaining to neighbourhoods. Most respondents live in social housing and there are a number of issues of concern regarding

housing conditions and overcrowding. Nevertheless there are relatively high levels of satisfaction with housing, despite the majority of respondents wishing to leave their present accommodation. A linked issue is that of housing churn. A large proportion of refugees and asylum seekers are relatively new to their present accommodation and most would like to move from their present homes, meaning housing stability and all that goes with it is an issue. There is also a concern regarding the sometimes long periods of time in which refugees stay in temporary accommodation. This further adds to concerns about other aspects of integration such as employment and community links. Despite quite high levels of satisfaction with the neighbourhoods in which people live, it is clear that there is a relativity in the way people respond to this question, with the turmoil experienced in their country of origin leading to more positive assessments of neighbourhoods here.

## CHAPTER 5 - EDUCATION

### Introduction

Both language development and access to education more generally are key factors in enabling refugees to rebuild their lives and attempt to achieve their educational and employment goals in their new country. Numerous nation states make language, along with the more nefarious 'cultural knowledge' or 'civic education' key planks of attempts to integrate newcomers. Less attention has been paid to the educational background of newcomers as well as their educational experiences and ambitions in the host society. This chapter begins by looking at the educational backgrounds of respondents before going on to look at sources of information about educational courses within the broader issue of educational access. The chapter then goes on to look at actual experiences of education, including the levels of satisfaction with that education. This leads onto the key issue of English language learning. The chapter then looks at barriers to education and educational aspirations before concluding by looking at children's' schooling within the broader issue of comparisons made between education here and education in respondents countries of origin.

### Educational background

As a starting point for questions about education we asked how many years of education respondents' had completed in their country of origin. Previous research has focussed on completion of primary and secondary school and other phases of further education<sup>24</sup>, but this study looks at the years of education due to wide differences in what school completion means in different countries. This is not to say that years of education represent a constant no matter the state involved but simply that it is a better proxy for understanding overall educational levels than other available options. Responses varied considerably, with a minimum of no education at all and a maximum of 25-years of education spread among 204 respondents.

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<sup>24</sup> See for example Refugees and asylum seekers in Scotland: A skills and aspirations audit <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2004/03/19169/35276>

**Table 18 – Years of formal education**

Years of education	Percent
none	<b>2.9%</b>
6 years or less	<b>9.8%</b>
7-9 years	<b>13.2%</b>
10-12 years	<b>31.9%</b>
13-15-years	<b>20.1%</b>
16 or more years	<b>22.1%</b>
Total	<b>100%</b>

The mean total among all cases was 11.94 years of formal education, compared to 12.6 for the UK population as a whole (this is according to OECD figures<sup>25</sup>, suggesting that the wide educational range includes a significant proportion of well-educated participants. The heterogeneity of responses should not be surprising when placed next to the diversity of education systems in respondents' countries of origin. Some come from nations with well-developed educational systems while others come from countries where significant formal education is the preserve only of a small elite. There were slight differences in responses by both gender and by status. These are shown in the following table, which shows the average years of education by gender and status.

**Table 19 - Years of formal education – survey 1**

Years of Education	Mean
Male	12.44
Female	11.30
Refugee	12.06
Asylum seeker	11.92

We can see our male respondents indicate over a year more formal education than our female respondents. The difference by status is less stark, with refugees showing 0.39 years more education than asylum seekers. This suggests that a one size fits all approach to educational access is unlikely to prove fruitful. While some refugees lack basic literacy skills in their own language, a sample not picked up sufficiently in this study due to the use of surveys as a starting point, others come with substantial educational qualifications and strong language skills and would therefore require a different type of support or policy intervention.

### Information Sources and Educational Access

For people who either need to develop their English language skills or want to complete other educational courses either because they have a background in that subject or because they feel the need to do so in order to access the labour market, both finding out about

<sup>25</sup> <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/56/9/37863998.pdf>

available courses and then trying to get on them are key issues. We begin this section in the sequential order of the process whereby knowledge of courses precedes access to those courses.

### **Information Sources**

Knowledge of classes and educational possibilities were achieved through a variety of means. There were eleven different organisations mentioned as providing advice and support to refugees on educational matters. The most common organisations were further education institutions and Job Centre Plus. However, word of mouth also remains hugely important. Only one respondent was unhappy with the advice received from these various organisations. This concerned the amount of time the agency had been willing or able to give to the refugee, with it not being considered nearly enough to make any informed decisions. For people recently dispersed to Glasgow, often shortly after arrival in the UK, knowledge of the systems they will encounter are completely absent. As such they face a daunting prospect of making informed decisions about many aspects of their lives in new and unfamiliar systems. More time was considered necessary to enable complete information to be processed. This view was echoed by a number of respondents who were satisfied with the service that they had accessed. While positive responses mostly concerned happiness with help in career paths, one respondent went as far as to say “they gave me another reasons to live again” (E58-2).

For highly skilled refugees there was a tendency to do their own research regarding educational courses. It was through the internet that one woman found not only the courses she has been doing but also the women’s library where she could access further information as well as social support (E58-2). For others, many of whom lacked basic IT skills, various agencies were of huge importance. For many there is something of a snowball effect whereby once on a course it is far easier, often through the college itself, to gather further information on other courses. One man talked of getting on an Open University course after having done ESOL. ESOL was in many cases seen as the precursor to any educational possibilities, although obviously not for those from English speaking countries or with good language skills. This progression in educational matters was mentioned by a number of interviewees at both interview stages in the research. One woman who had ambitions to study international health issues was attempting to access that by first completing an HNC, which she had found out about while doing a basic IT course (E140).

One man combined his own research with information from friends. The information procured led to him developing his English while also looking at further educational options. However, he was clear from the information provided to him that there was a choice to make

between doing something you'd like to do and doing something where you've been told there is work available. The sources of advice, however, give some cause for concern in this case. "For choose a course, there's two option, one option is what you like, and one option is what here needs" (E529-2). He had looked at pursuing his own profession, which was similar to being a surveyor. However, when he spoke to an advisor in his college who had come to do a number of sessions, but from an agency whose name he could not remember, he told the following story. "She was very happy with social care, but photography, or surveying, or drawing map, she wasn't happy with that and eventually recommended me I should one year continue English and after that think about what subject, maybe social care, she was very happy with social care". This view was given despite a favourable assessment of the advice provider. This points to an issue of real concern whereby refugees are in some cases being diverted in their decision-making rather than being advised and supported. However, this man had not entirely given up hope of pursuing something more akin to his interests and was looking at doing an NC in architectural design once his language skills had develop sufficiently. His longer terms plans were to complete an HND in a related subject. However, he also planned to pursue social care in the event of being unsuccessful in these ambitions. This dual approach was also evident in the stories of other respondents and indicates a wide and sophisticated approach in simultaneously addressing both educational and labour market issues among refugees.

### **Educational Access and Barriers**

While education is seen as hugely important among our research respondents, particularly language education, there were a number of significant difficulties in accessing courses. For those who indicated a desire to access education, we asked in Survey 2 if anything had prevented them from doing so. There were a variety of responses, many of which can be thematically grouped. One of the main issues concerned finances. Many people simply could not afford to begin courses, even once they had been accepted on them. In some cases this was also linked to family issues whereby there was a need or desire to start to provide for family members. However, financial restrictions were also mentioned by people without family responsibilities. E18-2 started university but by the time of the 2nd interview he had been forced to leave due to issues with his wife's benefit and a subsequent need to contribute more, either physically or financially to childcare. He then looked into doing this course part-time but has decided that the length of time this would take made it impracticable. This was another case where the eagerness to work led to shorter term decision making. Some respondents talked of being accepted onto educational courses, and some starting those courses but giving them up for financial reasons. "But this is a wee bit hard to study..... Personally for me just with the finance, the finance situation, because you get the bursary and you have to pay everything. You don't get nothing for survive, so I

decided now just to finish this year the NQ, then after I go and find a job, work for some time, and then I come back to finish my studies” (E38). However, others who had left education for financial reasons were unsure if their financial situation would ever be sufficient to allow them to access education in the future. Thus, leaving courses was seen as having a finality to most respondents.

The balance between wanting to find employment and wishing to pursue education was a difficult one but may highlight the need for short term financial progression as being more important than longer term ambitions among a large proportion of refugees. This can lead to decision making that relegates past experiences below immediate self-sufficiency. Despite the feeling among some respondents that doing further education would simply delay employment, there were a larger number of respondents who indicated a real hunger to do further education, (as stated above, 85% in Survey 1), but also suggested that the options were somewhat limited. One stated that “Well, I’m somebody who likes studying and I also like working with public, you see. So I tried, with my situation, I tried to find out courses in education I could do, but I couldn’t find any, and so the only thing I’ve managed to get into was health” (E750). He was unsure why he had had to accept a course that he did not want to do, although he suspected that the perception of his educational levels to date were at least part of the reason.

English language learning was seen as a pre-cursor to other educational options by many respondents and there were examples of respondents having been on a waiting list for ESOL classes for two years (E657). In the meantime many talked of trying to teach themselves English while waiting for access to training (Far 27). There is a significant desire to learn English that lack of classes therefore does not end in all cases. One man talked of taking a dictionary everywhere with him and writing down things he didn’t understand to discuss with his Scottish girlfriend (E430). Others spoke of simply trying to speak with neighbours and friends and attempting to read newspapers in libraries to develop their vocabulary. One woman, here due to the family reunion process, had been unable to access ESOL due to the type of visa she was now on. She was told she would have to pay for it, which was out-with her financial capability (A14). She was attempting to teach herself English but was having considerable difficulty in doing so. This meant that although both wanting and needing language tuition she was unable to access courses and felt stuck, not able to socialise, make friends or work due to her poor language skills.

For many asylum seekers the main issue was one of status, which restricted the types of courses that they could pursue<sup>26</sup>. Others mentioned barriers such as health, particularly mental health, waiting lists, the distance of colleges from peoples' homes and the need to develop language skills prior to accessing any other courses. The importance of access to education as an asylum seeker is highlighted by E58-2. She had done a basic computer course while going through the asylum process and has now started to do a business studies course, with the aim of doing accountancy in the future, something she did in her country of origin but could not get her qualifications in that subject recognised. She likened this to 'starting afresh'. Prior to becoming a refugee she had tried to get on the same course she is now doing and was told that although she qualified, all other applicants would be considered first and only if there was space after that would she be offered a place. She felt, however, that having had that ability to start her educational journey while still in the asylum process that she was considerably further forward in that journey than would otherwise have been the case. She argued that the basic IT course and the earlier process of applying for the business studies course had put her far further forward than she would have been had she had to wait to be a refugee before beginning that process. This meant she was confident she would soon be able to make a major contribution to her new society through developing education and then working and volunteering.

Another important issue that prevents people from accessing educational courses was the issue of childcare. One woman talked of having been given admission to a course, and her college had agreed to allow her to attend part-time for childcare reasons. However, as a lone parent the required 6pm until 9pm meant she was unable to take up this course as she lacked the financial or familial support (E58). Childcare was also a major issue in terms of educational access for E33-2. She felt that it was more difficult to get part-time courses in higher education but argued forcefully that she would be unable to do education full-time due to her childcare responsibilities. However, waiting for her children to be old enough to not require the same level of care would simply increase the already problematic issue of employment and educational gaps. Thus while childcare issues are of concern to the population of Scotland a whole, the lack of finances, social networks and/or family nearby makes it a more insurmountable issue for many refugees.

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<sup>26</sup> Asylum seekers in Scotland can access part-time educational courses (up to 16 hours per week) to all further education (not higher education). The situation in England is that education is tied to asylum seeker support and as such those new in the asylum process have no education access.



## Educational Experience in Scotland

Moving on from access issues, although obviously with major overlap, we then went on to look at actual experiences of education in Britain. This was first done in a multiple response question in Survey 1, which allowed individuals to indicate all courses that they had attended while in Britain. The following table indicates the number of people who have attended courses, and what those courses were across the whole period that they have been in the UK.

**Table 20 – Types of educational courses attended**

Type of Course	Numbers who have attended
English for Speakers of Other Languages	174
Scottish Vocational Qualification	25
Higher National Certificate	19
Higher National Diploma	10
Higher education	21
Other	35

The figures indicate the most common type of education attended by respondents, by a considerable distance, is ESOL classes, with all other forms of education being accessed by a relatively small proportion of respondents. Looking at these responses against English language proficiency it is clear that respondents seek to develop language skills before going on to try and access other forms of education. Responses in interviews and in Survey 2 confirm this.

We then asked respondents about their educational aspirations. This began by simply asking if people would like to return to education. Some 85% of respondents in Survey 1 indicated a desire to continue or return to education in the future. There were a huge variety of educational courses that our respondents wished to do, ranging from simple language courses to PhD study in a number of complex areas. However, when these ambitions are set against the above table, there are clearly factors that prevent the desired educational access. In interviews and in Survey 2 we therefore sought to examine the reasons people had not successfully pursued these courses.

### Case Study 5

E8 is a male former teacher from East Africa who arrived in Scotland in 2008 and got refugee status 18 months later. E8 had high educational levels from his country of origin, having completed 20 years of formal education there. On arrival in Scotland he wanted to have his science degree recognised but eventually had to accept it being converted to a higher education diploma. While initially being unsure of whether to try and find full-time and longer-term employment or whether to upgrade his qualifications, on investigation he found that the types of jobs he might be able to access were too limited and would not use many of the skills that he had. At the time of Survey 1 he was doing voluntary work and he was confident he would find a full-time job in the coming two years

E8 therefore applied to do a science degree at a Scottish university. This came after spending a period of time trying to access a funded place. By the time of Survey 2 E8 had managed to find part-time employment to accompany his studies. Although he is able to study a complex subject in English he felt that until starting work his conversational English was not as good as he would have liked. Working 20 hours a week and living in shared accommodation has had a positive effect on his language skills and he no longer feels embarrassed to speak with people in the street.

He sees his future in Scotland, using both his degree and the pre-existing skills that he has. He feels that it takes time to make connections and to settle in a new place but now feels ready to do so. He also feels that now is the time that refugees need to be up-skilling in order to be ready for the economic upturn.

### Satisfaction with education

Moving beyond barriers, we wanted to find out more about how people felt about the courses that they *had* managed to access. This began by looking at the issue of educational satisfaction. In Survey 1 we asked how satisfied respondents were with the amount of education that they had had in the UK. The term amount was used to differentiate quality, best done through qualitative enquiry, from quantity. The results in Survey 1 show fairly high levels of satisfaction, with 67% saying that they were either satisfied or very satisfied.

**Table 21 – satisfaction with education**

How satisfied are you with the amount of education you've had while in the UK	Percent
very satisfied	22.2
satisfied	44.9
not sure	15.8
not very satisfied	12.8
very unsatisfied	4.3
Total	100.0

In addition to the closed education question in the survey we asked respondents to explain why they answered the questions in the way that they did. While many of a reasons for the answers given were merely reaffirmations of those answers, such as *'I am satisfied because of the education I have done'*, others provided a few more details. A number of people indicated that the time that they had had to wait before getting on any course had left them somewhat dissatisfied. Others, though, felt that the improvement in their English language was obvious and they therefore felt happy with this development. Many others commented on the difficulties they faced with regard to financing educational courses and others still were satisfied with what they had done thus far, but were keen for this to continue. Some respondents indicated that they would like to be able to advance their training in their own specialties rather than doing so in more generic courses. The streaming of refugees into

fairly narrow educational options was raised as a concern along with linked issues of deskilling and subsequent underemployment (see Employment chapter).

Overall those in education, particularly higher education, highlighted satisfaction with both the very fact of being in education and the nature of the teaching. There was widespread gratitude for being given the opportunity to develop their educational skills. Indeed some interviewees spoke of the prospect of having UK qualifications as completing them, the future whether it now be in Scotland or back in their country of origin was no longer quite so daunting, or would not be so once qualifications were secured. This issue of the importance of official recognition of skills is returned to below. There was also a general view that teaching was both of a very good standard but also that it was done in a way that enabled the best possible outcomes. The reasons given for this view concerned teachers going out of their way to enable effective learning and that the knock-on effect of this was that teachers were friendly and courses were well run.

For those struggling to get on courses that they wanted to do there was considerable frustration at the rigidity of the application process. Not recognising existing qualifications was a major issue but so too was not giving any benefit to skills short of formal qualifications. For those with practical skills but no university degrees this was a considerable problem. The other main issue mentioned in interviews was the assumption that even speaking with a strong accent was a sign of poor language skills. Some refugees studying complex courses in English alluded to the fact that when using normal day-to-day English they spoke with a heavy accent and that this had led to the questioning of their suitability to do certain educational courses. That said, respondents were increasingly speaking with Scottish accents and felt that doing so was in many cases indicative of them belonging here. It also led to them feeling more accepted by the population as a whole.

#### **Case Study 6**

E33 is a female refugee from the Middle East. She has formerly worked as a lecturer within a higher education institution in her country of origin. She has 18 years of formal education, some of which was in English so she therefore had excellent language skills on arrival in 2007. She got refugee status a year later.

At the time of interview 1 E33 was considering the option of moving elsewhere in Britain in search of work but by the time of Interview 2 she had no plans to move. Although she has still struggled to access the labour market and faced a number of barriers in returning to education at a level appropriate to her educational level she feels more settled here. This has been due to both social circumstances changing, that is meeting more friends, and feeling that she has made some development in her attempts to access higher education.

During interview 1 E33 had completed a number of ESOL courses, despite pre-existing language skills, but was also going through the IELTS course<sup>27</sup>. In the meantime she was attempting to access funding to complete a PhD in her existing area of expertise.

By the time of interview 2 she had decided not continue with the IELTS course and had developed a new medium-term plan with regard to higher education. Instead of trying to gain funding to do a PhD she was in the processing of applying to do a Masters in her chosen field. This was primarily due to financial restrictions, which she found somewhat difficult to comprehend due to comparisons with the free higher education in her country of origin. Nevertheless, shortly after the second interview she was accepted onto this Masters course and so has started to make that first major step in her education goals.

She is happy with her children's education here and feels that the more open educational system here is a positive one. However, despite the fact that her children are progressing well in their education, they do not plan to follow the career paths of their parents due, at least in part, to the fact that E33 and her husband have faced a struggle to use the skills that they have. This has led to some angst regarding whether they have been a good example to their children.

### ESOL and English Language Learning

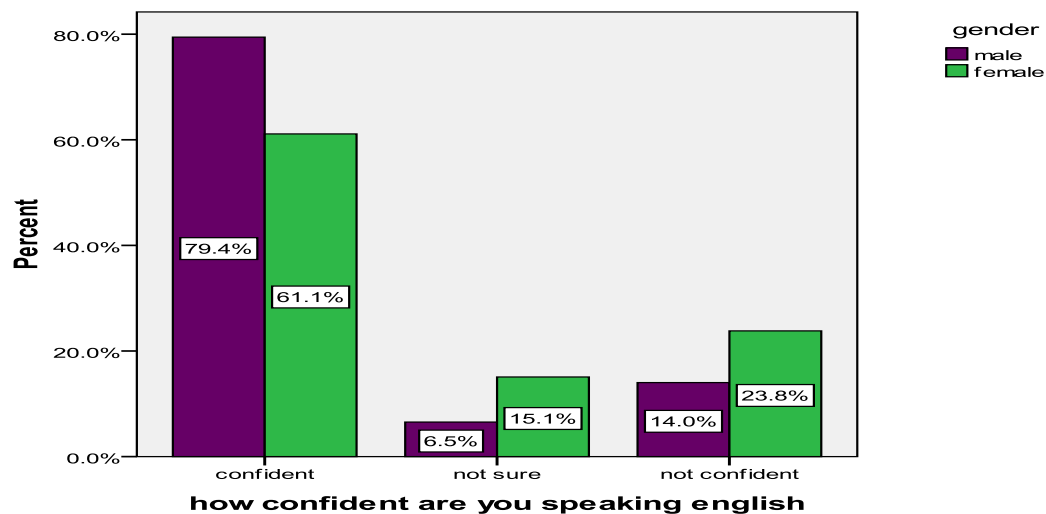
As already indicated, language skills formed a key part of discussions about educational courses and access and is also linked to other integration domains such as employment and communities. We therefore asked all respondents about their self-rated English language proficiency. The chart below provides the overall figures for respondents' confidence in speaking English. Confidence is not the same as ability, ability implying more tested criteria. For many of our respondents such tests would not have been carried out, and so what is being asked is about how they *feel* about their English rather than some more objective measure. The results show fairly high levels of confidence in speaking English.



Figure 18 – English Language Confidence – Survey 1

<sup>27</sup>The International English Language Testing System is a course and test of language proficiency required for some access to certain higher education courses.

There is a significant gender difference in overall confidence levels in speaking English. The following table shows this effect while also combining categories to produce only confident and not confident groupings.



**Figure 19 – Confidence speaking English – gender**

This shows that men feel considerably more confident than women in speaking English, with almost a quarter of women lacking confidence. While this may reflect educational levels and/or objective language skills, it is also possible that women are simply less likely to indicate high skill levels across a range of issues for reasons based on traditional gender behaviours.

The Survey of New Refugees asks respondents to rate their English abilities in terms of understanding, speaking, reading and writing compared to native English speakers. The results are shown below.

**Table 22 – English language competence in Survey of New Refugees  
Compared to native English speakers how well do you do the following?**

	Very well	Fairly well	Not very well	Not at all
Understand English	19.6%	34.5%	33.1%	12.8%
Speak English	15.3%	34.2%	36.8%	13.5%
Read English	24.1%	34.5%	27.9%	13.5%
Write English	19.7%	32.6%	32.7%	15.1%

This shows that among our sample there are fewer people who rate their English language skills poorly. Part of the reason for this may be due to the amount of time spent in the UK as the SNR findings concern those being recognised as refugees within the previous 8 months,

while our sample includes many people who will have been in the country for long period of time.

When crossing year of arrival with English language confidence we see a varied picture. Confidence levels go up and down across years, with the highest level of confidence among those arriving in 2001, some 92.3% of whom describe themselves as being confident speaking English, and the lowest in 2006 at just 47.4%. There is no relationship between the two variables according to a Pearson correlation measurement<sup>28</sup>. This means that the situation is far more complicated than saying that there is a temporal solution to language needs whereby the longer people live here the more language confidence increases. Such a finding may also be linked to the availability of language classes and how this fluctuates, an issue of particular importance at a time of spending cuts in public services.

Such a result is supported by findings of those answering the same question in Survey 2. Confidence levels are similar among those answering in Surveys 1 and 2, despite the 18 month gap between the two surveys. Pairing responses by respondent supports the view that little has changed in language confidence across two surveys. However, somewhat paradoxically 28 of the 34 people who answered the question in Survey 2 felt that their language skills had improved in the period between Survey 1 and Survey 2, yet confidence levels were static. This suggests that respondents generally do not lack confidence even in cases where their language skills are somewhat basic. That is, it is not confidence in trying to speak English that is a problem; it is identifiable progress in language development. Nevertheless, language improvement is seen as having numerous benefits.

Not all respondents who indicated in Survey 1 that they were confident in their language skills did similarly in interviews. That is, when people who said that they are confident speaking English were probed a number of other issues emerged, not the least of which was a lack of confidence due to a fear of making mistakes and subsequently being thought of in a disparaging way. Learning English was felt by some to reduce that fear and embarrassment. "I think firstly I was scared to speak with people and when I saw someone I changed my way...maybe they want to speak with me and I can't answer and it was very embarrassing for me" (E529). For this respondent there was a status element to such behaviour. Having lived a privileged life in his country of origin he was not used to such feelings of embarrassment and subsequently felt somewhat marginalised. This created further adjustment problems for him. The issue of being shy in speaking English was also raised by one woman, despite the fact that she had completed a Masters degree in English in her

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<sup>28</sup> The Pearson measurement is a standard way of determining whether there is a correlation between two separate variables.

country of origin. Instead of making mistakes “I, I don’t know, hesitate, I’d prefer to keep silent, not speaking or communicating” (E33-2).

Language development, and with it a lessening of fear was seen as having numerous positive impacts from general communication to accessing services. One respondent stated that communication issues were absolutely crucial. “If you can’t speak English, you can’t communicate with a lot of people, only when you meet someone from your country, yeah. It’s really difficult to integrate even if you meet someone, like I’m African, if I meet some other African who can’t speak English, it’s really difficult to be friends” (E750). Another added that “it’s made me very relaxed because a long time ago when we came you had to find an interpreter or somebody to help you, but day by day we are building our confidence and we are trying to do it better and better and better, but it’s working very well now” (E752). This day-to-day impact rather than more structural service access was the predominant one talked of among our interviewees. “It helps us if we go shopping, and to shops, and just everyday life. And also in my voluntary job, I speak to people every day who are from here. Yes, and it’s thanks to these lessons because when I arrived here I didn’t understand a word. When I arrived here, I was lost” (E137).

Social contact is clearly positively impacted by language proficiency, and this is then viewed as having a clear impact upon the mental health of respondents. “Speaking English is quite useful in your life. You are able to communicate with people. Sometimes they are not able to do anything for you but at least you can tell them your problem and you know you will be - you feel you have less stress and you can speak to other people. When you are not able to say your problem you will be depressed” (E681). Some respondents even went as far as to say that communication allowed for him to live as a human being in Scotland. “I could live like a human because when you can’t communicate with people in the society, you are not living like a human” (E541).

The social as well as educational importance of English language courses was also highlighted by E529-2. He stated that “this college, this classes help all students to find out how we can....not just English, about life in Scotland, about social, everything, and we also had citizenship classes”. ESOL classes therefore also had a real social function. One man spoke of having friends from many European nations but felt that even within college there wasn’t enough joint events with ESOL learners and ‘Scottish people’. He talked of having parties with fellow students. Overall he argued that Glasgow was a very friendly city. “When they see each other, they smile, they respect each other, it’s nice” but added that there was a need to create opportunities for more widespread contact once language skills were able to cope with this.

Confidence and ability in speaking English outside of the classroom environment was mentioned by a large number of interviewees. Friendships were viewed as having a symbiotic relationship with language development. Having friends brings with it more confidence in speaking English without fear of embarrassment or, as E33-2 put it, 'making him or her tired to speak to me'. However, language development was also key to making new friends through increased confidence. This increased confidence also led to E33-2 volunteering to help run and mentor in a number of courses that she once attended, which she felt was having the further beneficial impact on both her language skills and her self-confidence.

Language also opened up educational access for some interviewees. One man talked of ESOL opening up an HNC and subsequently an Open University course (E137). After little more than a year in Scotland E153-2 had developed good language skills which he put down to speaking with fellow students at college. This had allowed him to move from studying English, which he did for just 3 months, to beginning an HND in IT. He has some previous experience of IT and therefore viewed this as something of a natural progression. His language skills were aided by a longstanding interest in English. In his country of origin he watched movies in English and was even a regular viewer of English language news channels.

The difficulty of studying non ESOL classes in English despite good language skills was also highlighted by many interviewees. One man (E529-2) spoke of ESOL teachers speaking very slowly due to them always teaching people whose second language was English. He referred to the contrast with a 'very good teacher' in another subject who spoke with a "Scottish accent and speak very fast, so it was very difficult for me to follow him". While he did not expect non ESOL teachers to speak at a pace for somebody developing their English, he simply sought to highlight the added difficulty in general study for people for whom English is not their first language.

### **Educational Comparisons**

When asked to compare educational experiences in respondents country of origin to those here there were a variety of responses. Generally speaking the Scottish system was felt to be more open with better facilities. For many, the primary difference between education in Scotland and in his country of origin was technological or more widely concerned the existence of facilities. Some respondents talked of their home country being one in which they would be given a booklet to work with, while in Scotland education was far more IT based. This was viewed as putting refugees behind the general population in terms of where



they started but respondents were pleased to be able to develop IT skills while simultaneously learning other subjects.

Assessment was seen as being more narrowly focussed in Scotland with a culture of testing in many respondents' countries of origin being contrasted with less testing here. Another issue raised was that in Britain people are given a second chance should they fail their exams. Studying here was viewed as being much easier than in many respondents' country of origin due to the format of exams. Respondents talked of being told some of the general subjects that would be covered in the exams with the result that students were able to do much more narrowly focussed revision. This was a common view among respondents. There was a feeling that in Scotland adjustments are made and resits allowed enabling you to proceed in education. This was contrasted with countries of origin where one failure would either lead to having to repeat the whole year in all subjects or would even mean you had failed and could no longer pursue the course. More importantly, however, were college teachers who were rated as a huge support and were viewed as people who really wanted you to do well. "If you have any problem, any problem, any area, they are there to assist you, because they really want you to understand what they are teaching you"(E58-2). This too was contrasted with the more formal and strict approach taken by teachers in the countries from which respondent had previously studied.

### **Education and Employment**

It is somewhat difficult to disentangle education and employment issues, particularly those from respondents' time in Britain. Some people talked of avoiding education here due to a desire to work, leading them to look to training rather than education. "I need to start work and to have more money to have other things to do, but you can do some small training as well of course" (E752). Access to education was in some senses seen as a fall back for people struggling to access the labour market, that is, education in some cases was seen as delaying a job search. However, in many cases this was seen as necessary. When asked if they were looking for work one respondent stated that "Not very seriously because I was in college and more I was thinking about what should I do after English, maybe college one course then after that session..... I think I've heard here it's very important we have a certificate, even if I have experience from something I need a certificate from here to find a normal job" (E529).

Education was therefore particularly prized in relation to its impact on searching for employment, and this was highlighted in Stage 5 of the research as a contrast with his country of origin. "Here, certificate is very important for find a job, it's very important and

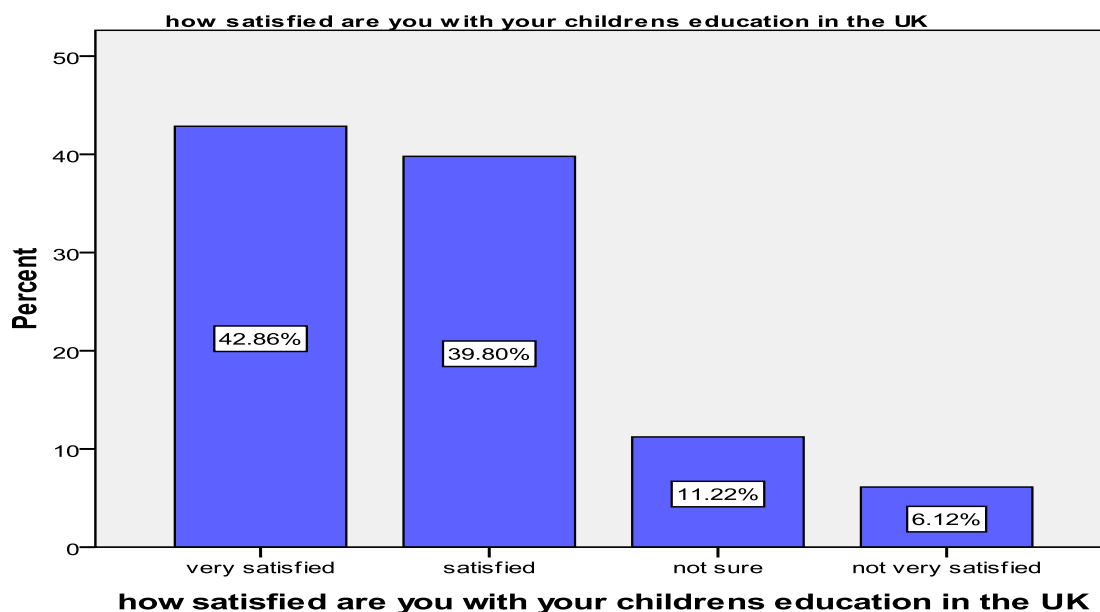
everything, every step you have has a certificate for that, but in my country, sometimes certificate is not important, because they speak and they find out you can do it" (E529-2). Many of our respondents make strategic decisions concerning whether to attempt to access the labour market or whether to try and get reskilled prior to searching for work. "I couldn't speak English that much and I didn't have any qualification, so I chose this way to go studying and getting qualifications" (153-2). This decision was informed by the advice received from refugee support organisations. Nevertheless it was the desire to have evidence of skills and qualifications that drove decision-making.

This issue of skill recognition is a recurring one. One interviewee spoke of having an English degree from his country of origin but that "when I transferred, my degree was given just normally, HND. HND doesn't put me in a third year of university" (E18-2). He felt that he had been treated unfairly due to the fact that others with degrees from his country of origin in other subjects such as engineering were able to do an HND prior to going straight into 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> year at university, whereas he would have to start from 1<sup>st</sup> year.

Skills recognition also had another dimension for E18-2. Having been thwarted in his attempts to quickly get a degree in Scotland he had looked into the option of the Open University as a means of balancing education with familial responsibilities. However, when thinking longer term he was concerned that a degree from the Open University would not be recognised in his country of origin if he were to return some time in the future. The other option he was looking to was to do a course to become a registered English teacher for speakers of other languages. In the meantime E18-2 was attempting to get trained for employment. He had recently taken courses in security to allow him to work as a security guard or doorman, although there were other courses that he wanted to do but could not afford at present.

### **Children Schooling**

Moving on from respondents views of their own educational experiences, for those with children, we asked how they felt about their children's education in Scotland. There were high levels of satisfaction. Indeed, the table below shows that of the 98 people who indicated that they had children none said that they were very unsatisfied and just six that they were not very satisfied.



**Figure 20 – Satisfaction with children’s education**

This shows just over 82% of respondents are satisfied with their children’s education. These figures are just below the Scottish Household Survey results for the 15% most deprived communities, 89% of whom indicated some satisfaction with their children’s education. Among the general population some 92% indicated similarly.

One woman in follow-up interviews talked of the balance between fun and accessible education and important academic achievement, a balance that she feels is very good here. “I think you’ve got a beautiful system, try to mix between pleasure and data and knowledge. But still they need to, someone to ask them, answer me this questions” (E33-2). This view was also highlighted by other parents, that children were sometimes not being asked enough and that this made progression difficult for parents to ascertain sometimes. However, such concerns were quite rare and parents were generally very happy with their children’s education.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has highlighted some of the key findings within the education domain. While there are large variations in educational attainment among refugees in Scotland, the findings show a population only slightly less well educated than their British counterparts. A large number would like to continue their education beyond language education but there are a number of things that inhibit this desire, not the least of which is the trade-off refugees make between furthering their education and accessing employment. Other barriers include the recognition of existing educational levels, finances and childcare. Nevertheless, respondents show high levels of satisfaction with the education that they and their children have received

in Scotland. Of most importance to the majority of respondents has been English language education. The effects of language progression have been shown in this chapter to be multi-dimensional and are seen by most refugees as a pre-requisite to any notion of full integration.

## CHAPTER 6 - HEALTH

### Introduction

Health has clear implications for many other aspects of people's lives and their ability to rebuild those lives. There are a wide variety of health related issues that are of relevance to any study of refugees. These include profound issues around the persecution experienced by refugees in their country of origin, which is not looked at in any detail in this research, to the impact of the asylum process. However, also of importance is the difference in health systems and subsequently how people both find out about and traverse a new healthcare system. This chapter begins by looking at how people find out about the Scottish healthcare system before going on to look at access to health services and any problems with such access. We then look at respondents' views of the healthcare system before going on to examine their actual experiences. The chapter then goes on to examine respondents views of their own health, including any health problems, particularly around mental health, before looking at the factors that respondents see as having an impact on their health.

### Information and Knowledge of Healthcare System

Knowledge of how the UK health system works is key to the experiences respondents subsequently have of that system. Overall, respondents felt that they had a reasonable understanding of the health system. Knowledge came from direct experience and access to health professionals, which had something of a snowball effect. For people living in one area of Glasgow the local health visitor was the key source of information. One couple talked of the health visitor being their key contact point. She informed them where to go for what issues as well as ascertaining their general health early after arrival. This early orientation made them both feel comfortable and knowledgeable with regard to what to expect during the course of their time here. The only negative experience recounted concerned a broader (mis)understanding of how health issues could and should be dealt with. This concerned a GP not prescribing antibiotics when their son was ill. The other issue regarding lack of knowledge concerned out of hours whereby A&E had been used for any health needs after GP surgery closing times as there was a lack of awareness of out of hours services (E368). There were some respondents who did demonstrate a misunderstanding of the British healthcare system when they first arrived. "When I first arrived, personally I thought that the GP would take care of all my health problems. I didn't know that you had to go and register with a dentist. It was only when I was doing this questionnaire that I realised that I could also go to a dentist as well as a GP" (E137).

E279-2 found out about health care on arrival, having been told how to access a GP at their briefing at the Scottish Induction Service<sup>29</sup>. This led to her also accessing psychological support, having been referred by the GP. However, she had not been told about other aspects of the UK's health system and had discovered some of things about it through the cumulative experience of years living here.

Another respondent made reference to the waiting times for operations for pre-existing health problems. "I'm waiting maybe for an operation.....just I'm waiting now for the moment, but the process was very long with them. Now it's one year and a half now....one year and a half I saw my ophthalmologist three times. The first time he gave me medicines. The second time he gave me another medicine and the second time he put me on the waiting list to see for an operation" (E38). This issue of waiting times was also related to a misunderstanding of the role of GPs in healthcare (E368). That is, respondents felt that GPs were either not really medical professionals and more of a triage service, or alternatively that GPs were able to provide appointment times for specialist services, and the fact that they did not and could not was a bone of contention (E368-2).

### Access to Health Care

Given that there was a reasonable understanding of the health system we asked respondents whether they were registered with a doctor and a dentist, and if not what their reasons for not being registered were. There were very few people in Survey 1 not registered with doctors, but much higher numbers not currently registered with a dentist.

**Table 23 – GP registration – Survey 1**

	Registered with a Doctor?	Percent
	yes	96.5%
	no	3.5%
	Total	100%

The small number not registered with a doctor was mostly new arrivals. However, there were also issues around people not knowing where to register and small numbers not seeing health services as preventative. That is, they replied that their reason for not being registered is that they say they do not have any health problems. One man also told of how he had not registered with a GP due to the time taken to get an appointment. Experience of GP services was, however, generally very positive. One typical comment was that refugees had a "good opportunity for the health. The health system is good here, just when you register and book an appointment they help you" (E752).

<sup>29</sup> The Scottish Induction Service is a service provided by Scottish Refugee Council to orientate new arrivals, explain the asylum process, advise on how to get legal representation and a GP, and explain the housing process.

There was, however, an issue of access for refused asylum seekers. One man had repeatedly tried and failed to register with a GP and had subsequently not seen a doctor for 8 years. He therefore felt unable to answer many questions put to him regarding his health as they were something of an unknown. "I don't have a doctor because they ask me for a letter through the Home Office, I don't get any letter from the Home Office.....nothing you can do, nothing, I just go like, if you go, I have to go for a pharmacy to get like a painkiller.....Just like I never, like I no been doctor about eight years and I don't know..... I might have some problem and I don't know as well" (E430). He talked at length of GP surgeries all asking for Home Office paperwork and/or confirmation of his address that he did not have and so a number of surgeries subsequently refused to register him, including his former GP from the period prior to his refusal.

One refused asylum seeker on Section 4 support talked of the problems in travelling to healthcare providers. She stated that "I am grateful that I get Azure card, that I don't have to sleep hungry, but in terms of travel I cannot stay at home.....if I stay at home I can become more sick, because that's the time I have to think about everything that we went through" (E279). That said, the treatment received was rated very highly. She continued "I've been well looked after and I've been well treatment, I've been given the right medications, I've been...psychologists and psychiatrists have really been so good and understanding" (E279). She was particularly grateful that she was allowed to keep her existing GP even after she moved out of the doctor's catchment area. Continuity of care was highly prized among a population experiencing flux and lack of choice in many other aspects of their lives, more of which below. Nevertheless, there was no prospect for this woman to ever feel that their health was excellent due to her experiences. "What I've gone through, you can feel bitter, but it's part of me, it's part of my...it's now like in my history, part of my history.....It doesn't disappear, the scars are always there towards me". Nevertheless, the benefits of continuity are also refracted in the difficulties experienced by those not able to maintain this continuity in health provision.

There were fewer respondents registered with a dentist, with almost a quarter at Survey 1 not having a dentist. Men were slightly less likely to be registered with a dentist than women, with a similar small disparity in that refugees are more likely to be registered with a dentist than asylum seekers.

**Table 24 – Dentist registration – Survey 1**

<b>Are you registered with a dentist?</b>	<b>Survey 1</b>	<b>Survey 2</b>
yes	77.3%	85.7%
no	22.7%	14.3%
Total	100%	100%

While registration with a dentist was lower than for doctors, for paired responses we see a rise in both the number and the percentage of respondents registered with a dentist between survey 1 and survey 2, from 77% in survey 1 to 85% in survey 2.

The vast majority of respondents not registered with a dentist at Survey 1 did not see dental care as preventative as the most common reasons given was that they do not have any problems with their teeth. However, a number also stated that their reason was that they did not have an HC2 form<sup>30</sup>, providing free or reduced dental costs. Some had never had one and some had lost their form and didn't want to ask for a new one. For some respondents there was a feeling exhibited throughout the research that if they managed to stay relatively invisible then they will not be subject to questioning and avoid any threat of removal from the UK. However, this had a potentially negative knock on effect on respondents' health.

However, others did not register with dentists due to the chaotic nature of their lives. One refused asylum seeker told us "I really like scared myself, even sometimes if my teeth are sore and stuff I can't mention it because of my situation. I'm living a stressed life, I'm telling you I can't sleep..... I have a lot to do here to first protect myself and having to go to a dentist I can do that later" (E606). There is also an issue of lack of complete and correct information regarding access to dental care. One said "I went to ask in my area to register for a dentist, but they told me that I have to pay £10 to book an appointment, but I didn't have it so I left" (E751). Another respondent even alluded to the present lack of problems with her teeth being risked by going to a dentist. "Since I entered here, I've never had any dental problem. At the moment I haven't registered, as I told you, just like law, the law is it is like sleeping, it is rude to wake it up" (E382). As mentioned above, one respondent also referred to not knowing he was able to register with a dentist prior to his involvement in this research project.

In the follow-up survey we added a question asking if respondents had experienced any problems trying to access healthcare. Of 32 people who answered the question just one said that they had, and this concerned the issue of the refused asylum seeker mentioned above. Most respondents talked of the ease of both registration and access as well as the relatively

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<sup>30</sup> The HC2 form provides free or reduces healthcare costs to those who have it



straightforward process of getting interpreters. One couple could not remember ever having experienced any access issues regarding health services. Added to that this couple were happy with the provision of interpreters, although the woman now translated for the man due to her far superior English levels. They felt that psychologically not having to rely on translators has been good for them (E34).

Continuity of care was highlighted as a major benefit of the health system by a number of research participants. For example, one couple highlighted that in the whole 5-years that they have been in Glasgow they have had the same doctor and the same dentist. Both were described as 'very great' (E34-2). Continuity in health care was also referred to by E279-2, but with added importance due to her traumatic experiences. Having had to access both GP services and mental health professionals, and having been moved a number of times in the city, she was hugely grateful that she had been able to keep the same health care professionals. "I was so traumatised and I couldn't go to another doctor and start explaining myself again and again". She was very complimentary regarding those professionals and felt that her health would be considerably worse without them. However, on the negative side visiting the doctor for treatment also had the effect of reminding her of her health problems by bringing back memories of why she had health problems in the first place, that is, the experiences that led to her flight.

The main negative experience highlighted by E279-2 concerned accident and emergency. She spoke of attending A&E with her psychologist after having collapsed during an appointment. She felt that she had been treated as if there was nothing wrong and that she was pretending to have fainted. Eventually she was taken to a mental health unit where she was treated for a couple of days before being released. However, it was clear that her views of how she had been treated were at least partly due to the way that she felt UKBA had treated her. The result was that she didn't feel any state authorities would ever treat her concerns seriously.

E745-2 talked of his doctor treating his health by promoting preventative health care in the form of healthier living. This has led to him being more careful what he eats and involving himself with football teams from his country of origin. Although he can't afford to pay to play friends all contribute to allow him to do so. E688-2 also talked of taking health care precautions. This particularly concerned eating. Although he talked of the desire to also live healthily in terms of physical activities he felt that his mind was elsewhere, that other facets of his life were in too much flux to allow this.

### **Case study 7**

E368 is from central Africa and got refugee status in 2008 after seven years in the asylum system. He described that asylum process as like 'being in a prison' due to the limitations it put on his life. He tried to counter these limitations by being actively involved in various community groups and by doing a variety of voluntary jobs. Since getting refugee status he has managed to get small bits of employment through agencies but not enough to live and to send money to family in his country of origin. He feels that the forced inactivity of the asylum process allied to difficulties trying to find stable work since getting status has had a negative impact on his mental health.

On arrival E368 gained his knowledge of the health system through a combination of word of mouth and initial orientation. However, this has left some gaps in his knowledge, such as the existence of out of hours GP services. He has used A&E on a couple of occasions due to the fact that his doctors' surgery was closed and he was unaware of either NHS24 or out of hours.

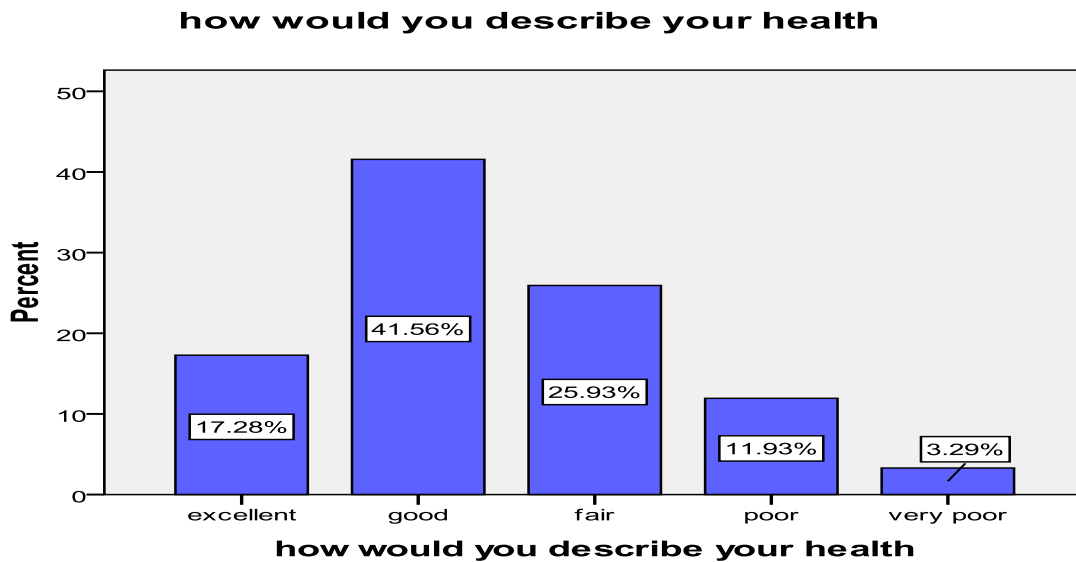
E368 has a long standing health problem but indicated that between survey 1 and survey 2 (a gap of just over a year) his health had improved. The health problem he had emerged here due a work related injury but he has been getting treatment for this problem. At the time of survey 1 he had not registered with a dentist but by the time of the first interview he had done so and was getting treatment. However, this means he had gone about 9 years without any dental treatment.

Despite regular doctor visits and some complaints about the time it can take to get an appointment he has never experienced any access problems around healthcare. His only other concern has been the occasions where he has attended an appointment and expected to receive a prescription, but has been sent away empty-handed. He feels that at such times his case has not been treated seriously enough.

With regard to preventative health care E368 has taken on board advice from his GP about how to live a healthier lifestyle. He talks of one comparison with his country of origin being the lack of processed food meaning that they eat fresher food there. He talks of the temptation here to eat more processed food even though you know it is not good for your health. Generally since receiving advice about healthy living he has been trying to eat much fresher food. One thing he does ensure is that he does not eat fast food. Nevertheless he feels that it is expensive to eat healthily here. He also talks of the excessive cost of exercise beyond walking. He used to use the gym at college but hasn't since for financial reasons.

### **Views of own Health**

We followed questions of access and experiences by asking people to self-rate their current health. The overall figures in Survey 1 show that people rate their own health relatively highly.



**Figure 21 – description of health**

This would appear to indicate that a large proportion of our respondents' feel that their health is reasonably good. The Survey of New Refugees Stage 1 Scottish sample is comparable to our sample, producing the following results for self-rated health.

**Table 25 - Survey of New Refugees Scottish sample- self-rated health**

Very good	Good	Fair	Bad	Very bad
25.5%	36.2%	24.8%	11.4%	2%

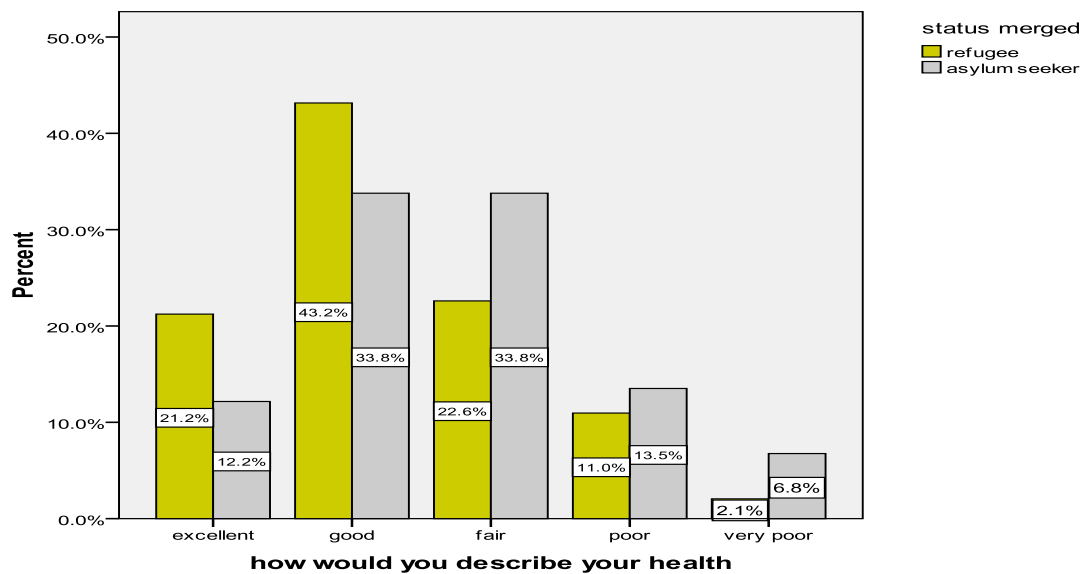
However, the Scottish Household Survey show the following results with regard to perceptions of health and indicate higher levels of self-rated poor health among our sample than among the general population.

**Table 26 - Scottish Household Survey – Health rating by gender**

	Male	Female	All
Good	76%	74%	75%
Fair	18%	19%	19%
Bad	6%	7%	7%

Similarly in the 2010 Scottish Social Attitudes survey of the overall Scottish population, 30.2% said their health was very good and 40.5% rated their health as good.

This would appear to indicate that a large proportion of our respondents' feel that their health is reasonably good. Refugees were considerably more likely to describe their health as being good than asylum seekers. As access issues appear to be negligible and pre-existing health issues are likely to be similar, this would appear to suggest that the asylum process itself has a somewhat independent effect on how people view their health.

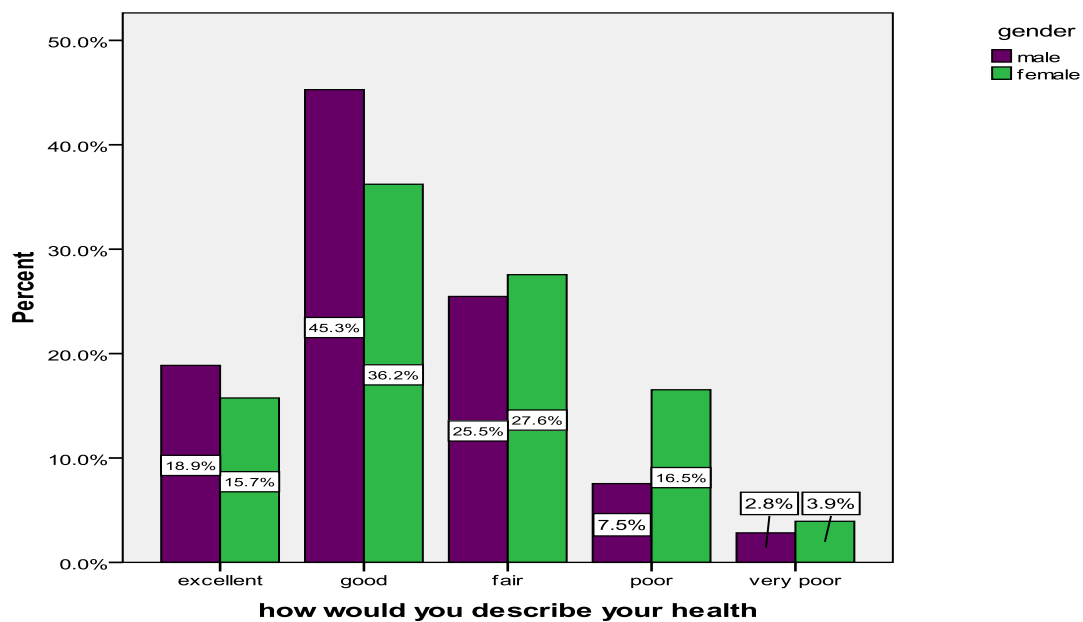


**Figure 22 – health rating by status – survey 1**

To start with, the asylum process was mentioned as having a profound effect on mental health. Needless to say this was most particularly the case for those who had spent a considerable period in that process, but involved anybody who felt that they had been disbelieved. “It make me feel very depressed.....I was thinking I was coming for a better life but to be honest I know I feel safe in somehow but in some way it gets struggling as well, you know, and most of the time I’m always lucky I’ve got good people around me but other way, you know, how do you manage (E430). One respondent talked of problems developing due to the asylum process. “Maybe because the thinking, too much thinking and the changing in your life, the big change in your life. Just now it’s giving me sore and headache .....that was only for the process, the process of the asylum seekers. That was the hardest period in my life. I will never, never forget. So this is maybe I think that’s why, because the problem started there, and after that developed. But now its ok. Partly you find medication and you find GP”(E751).

The process also had a negative impact on a number of respondents who had existing health problems. The asylum process was described as increasing ‘some of the trauma’ with the effect that one responded stated that his problems were about both his pre-flight and post-flight experiences. “I’ve got depression, being stressed all the time because I’m from a difficult situation, and then you find another harder one here” (E279).

There was also a gender dimension to how people viewed their health with men indicating better health than women. As shown below, part of the reason for this could concern the fact that more women report longstanding health problems as well as the fact that women are in the asylum process for longer.



**Figure 23 - Health rating by gender – survey 1**

This all suggests that asylum seekers and refugees feel, or at least say that they feel, relatively healthy but with significant differences across groups. Some of our interviewees felt that over the course of the research project that they had moved up a point on a likert scale, meaning health had improved. This was partly due to pre-existing conditions being seen to. One said “I discovered a problem when I came to this country, but from my country maybe because of lack of doctors and stuff I didn’t know I had.....maybe I had it but I don’t know about it”(E751). This issue was also evident in another respondent’s story. “I didn’t know that they existed prior to arriving here, but it was through undergoing medical tests that I did find out I had developed long term illnesses, chronic illnesses as they are called, and I thank God that I’m in this country, where it’s well developed and we are well monitored..... at least I’m in a place where I know that the best will have been done before I can go down” (E140).

We also asked people to think about how their health has changed over the past 6 months, one year, and two years. These 3 categories are shown in the chart below for the total sample in Survey 1. The table shows some level of consistency with a significant minority feeling that their health has been deteriorating over a period of time, and a larger number feeling that there has been no significant change.

**Table 27 – health changes in the past six months, year, two years – Survey 1**

	How has your health changed in the past 6 months		How has your health changed in the past year		How has your health changed in the past 2 years	
	count	%	count	%	count	%
<b>Much better</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>14.6</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>9.9</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>17.4</b>
<b>A little better</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>11.9</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>15.8</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>9.9</b>
<b>The same</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>34.8</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>29.2</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>23.3</b>
<b>A little worse</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>17.8</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>13.8</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>18.2</b>
<b>Much worse</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>5.1</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>3.2</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>5.9</b>

The only gender difference in these figures concerns the proportion of respondents indicating that their health has got much better in the past 2 years, 28% of men and just 18% of women. There is a concomitant larger proportion of women indicating that their health has deteriorated in the past 2 years. There is a similar difference between asylum seekers and refugees, with refugees indicating greater improvements in health than asylum seekers, although this difference is even starker with regard to the question of change over the previous six months. While 22% of refugees felt that their health had got much better in the previous six months, only 8.7% of asylum seekers indicated likewise. In addition, 11.6% of asylum seekers said their health had got much worse in the previous six months, compared to just 3% of refugees. This may suggest that status brings with it health benefits, although these benefits are not experienced equally by women.

While there are only slight changes regarding how people describe their health in Survey 2, with marginally more respondents stating that their health was good and a similarly small increase in those feeling that their health was poor, the results overall were similar. However, there is a significant drop in the numbers indicating deterioration in their health over the previous year.

### **Health Problems - Mental health**

Despite relatively high self-rated health, there are a number of significant health problems identified by research participants. Previous research indicates that mental health issues may be a concern for refugees and asylum seekers<sup>31</sup>. The 'Warwick Edinburgh Mental Well Being Scale' (WEMWBS) is used to obtain group results about mental health, although it is not designed for picking out individual cases of mental health problems. The mean score in an overall Scottish sample in the user guide for the WEMWBS was 50.7, across the fourteen categories in the scale, while our sample has a score of 49.7, indicating a greater preponderance of mental health problems for our respondents than for the Scottish population as a whole, although not by a huge amount. When looking at men and woman separately, we see our male respondents have a score of 50.9, slightly better than the

<sup>31</sup> Threadgold, Terry and Geoff Court, 2005, Refugee Inclusion: A Literature Review. Produced for the Welsh Refugee Council and the Welsh Assembly Government.

overall Scottish population, but lower than the Scottish male sample of 51.3. Women, on the other hand, have a score of 49.0, significantly lower than the 50.3 that the overall Scottish female sample shows.

Our refugee sample gives a mean of 50.8 while asylum seekers have an overall score of 47.2, indicating not only a better mental health outlook for refugees, but also that mental health issues are a real problem for asylum seekers. The only groups in the overall Scottish study that score lower than asylum seekers are those who self-rated their health as poor and very poor, and very low earners. The table below raises a number of issues of concern. Not only do both male and female refugees and asylum seekers indicate relatively low mental health and wellbeing outcomes compared to the Scottish population, the combination of gender and status coalesce to produce very concerning issues for female asylum seekers.

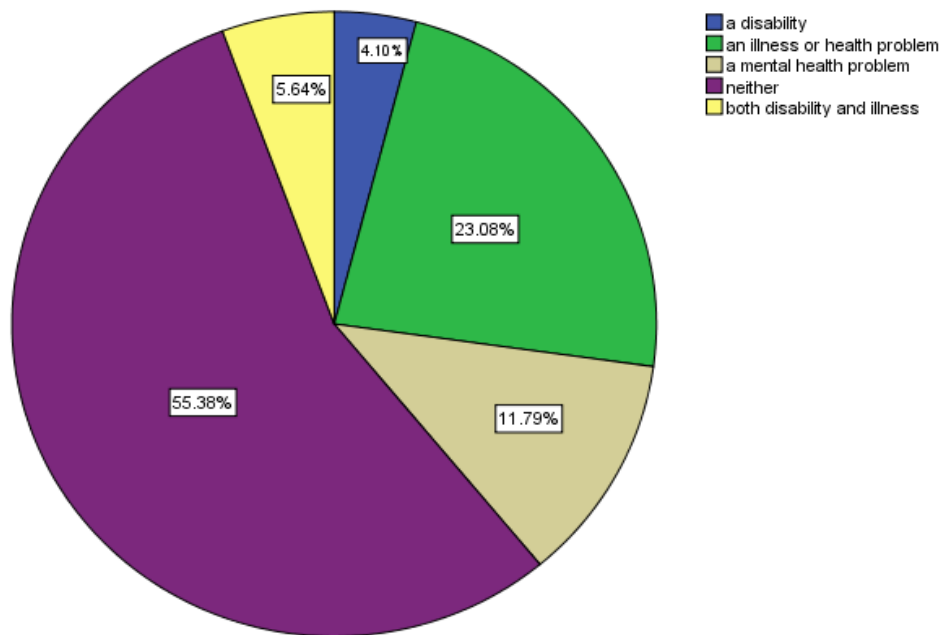
**Table 28 – well-being rating – Survey 1**

Scottish Population	<b>50.7</b>
Total study sample	<b>49.7</b>
Refugee sample	<b>50.8</b>
Asylum seeker sample	<b>47.2</b>
Scottish male population	<b>51.3</b>
Study male sample	<b>50.9</b>
Scottish female population	<b>50.3</b>
Study female sample	<b>49</b>
Female asylum seekers	<b>44.2</b>

Despite some profound changes in the lives of respondents over the course of the research, particularly with regard to employment matters, there has not been a resultant improvement in the mental health of respondents. Looking again to WEMWBS, the mean from our matched sample, that is, those who answered both surveys, actually drops between survey 1 and survey 2, from 49.9 to 49.4. This suggests that mental health and well-being are a greater problem for our 30 matched responses in Survey 1 than in Survey 2.

Overall, the findings indicate that a relatively high number of respondents feel that they have some health related problem. While the WEMWBS is not designed to provide mental health scores for individuals, and bearing that caveat in mind, when we look at the scores of all individuals in our sample, there would appear to be many more than 22 respondents whose score indicates some mental health issues. This may suggest considerable under-reporting of mental health problems.

### do you suffer from any health problems



**Figure 24 – Health problems – Survey 1**

Among respondents to the Scottish Household Survey, some 32% indicated that they have either a longstanding illness, a disability or a health problem. The incidence of these things was highest among the relatively low paid, those earning between £6000 and £15,000 pa. Our figures show far higher levels of health related problems. Among those answering the question 55.4% state that they have none of these problems.

Looking at the health problem question in disaggregated detail, we see little difference by status, despite status providing significant variation in the WEMWBS. The only variation by gender is the larger number of women indicating that they have a disability, although the numbers for each category are pretty low.

There were multiple dimensions to mental health problems for some interviewees. One talked of depression being related to both finances, lack of employment and concern about his children. “Three or four years, 5-years, me and my wife are totally depressed due to all this process and house and everything and she still see people, she feel lonely if somebody got a job and you couldn’t get a job yet. But I’m supporting her and I myself couldn’t get a job as well, so mostly she just tackle with me and she nearly fight with me, that we are so qualified and can’t get a job, I said look I’m trying going to the job centre and tell them to give me a job” (E35).



One woman talked of her health being 50/50. When asked why she answered in that way it was clear that mental health was her primary concern. "Because of my mental problem. Sometimes I'm not feeling well and sometimes I'm feeling good, but today I'm feeling better, I'm not bad" (E279-2). The up and down nature of mental health problems made life difficult to plan and signified some degree of lack of control. However, she saw things in relation to bad things balancing good and vice versa. "I've always been able to accommodate the bad and the good things in my life....every little good thing you get.....it's like a puzzle, when you get something small it removes a bad one". However, speaking with her children who were still in their country of origin was having a positive impact on her mental health despite her overwhelming desire for them to be here with her. This re-contact with her children was something of a double edged sword. "Even though its hurting me, but having good things coming into my life is helping me put the other pain aside". This other pain concerned the experiences that had led to her seeking refuge. What had happened to her had left an indelible mark on her psychology that she did not feel she would ever be able to get rid of. Not only had her experiences had an impact on her mental health but there were ongoing physical impacts too.

Health problems were therefore sometimes seen as perennial. While they could be dealt with on the whole they were never likely to go away. That said, status was viewed as the primary way of addressing this. She talked of feeling jealous, and at times bitter about others getting status while she stays in a liminal state for the foreseeable future.

While stress and depression were real issues for many respondents, the following quote shows not only these depression levels but also the self-reliance evident among many refugees. "Not depression, kind of what I have to do, how can I put my plan now? What's the first step, I have to do something for myself..... I try to find a solution to my problem and just go ahead. Any problem I can find a solution. If I have no solution I try to find an alternative to go ahead" (E33).

#### **Case study 8**

E430 is a single man from the Middle east who arrived in Scotland in 2001. He had some initial difficulty answering questions about his health due to the fact that he is a refused asylum seeker and has not managed to access any form of medical care for eight years. When asked about how his health was and whether he has any health problems he is therefore unable to answer. That said his responses across a number of questions changed between survey 1 and survey 2, all of which indicated a deterioration in health. He has a number of rotting teeth and suffers from severe headaches. He has tried to register with a GP on a number of occasions but due to the lack of home address has been unable to. At his last attempt to register he was asked for an HC2 form but has long since lost his and does not want to ask the UKBA for a new one, nor does he think they will give him one.

E430 is desperate to work and the reliance he has on friends and his partner has led to what

he thinks are bouts of depression. He feels he came of age in the asylum system and spends lots of time 'over-thinking' what has become of him. "Every day I live an embarrassment". Seven years ago E430 missed his bus to Liverpool for an interview with the UKBA and he feels that that moment was when his life changed. At the time of survey 1 he thought he would be better off in the future but was finding it 'very difficult to cope' financially by the time of survey 2.

Despite this E430 likes living here and does what he can to prevent health problems. He is very fit and eats healthily. He feels that he is integrated as he has lots of friends and knows the city well. The only thing missing, as far as he is concerned, are his papers.

### **Factors that Affect Health**

Implicit throughout interviews was the view that the things that people had experienced in their home countries had enduring health impacts. However, there were also experiences in Scotland that affected how people felt about their health. Social isolation was one of the chief issues that people felt negatively impacted on mental health. Indeed in developing discussion, many respondents talked about feelings of loneliness and depression from both social isolation and the asylum process. 279-2 felt that her health problems had a knock on effect on her ability to make friends. "I fear people knowing about my story because my story is not a good story.....I don't trust people, I don't like talking about people, I don't want people to talk about me. I think that's all. It makes it difficult for me to integrate too much". However, she had developed a friendship since interview 1 with one neighbour who had never asked her about her background. "This is what I want. I want to have a friend that I don't have to discuss my past". The asylum process was also mentioned by E745-2. He referred to sitting at home waiting week after week was having an impact on his mental health.

Life here had many stresses and strains. The lack of social contact was seen as having an impact on mental health, while mental health issues prevented respondents from seeking social contact. One respondent highlighted the increased stress as a result of not being able to send money to family. As a result "You feel you are under pressure and you don't have any job here and you're wasting your life here" (E681). Keeping busy was seen as being a way to avoid thinking about problems. "To keep myself busy that's my point is that I should be, otherwise I should be psychologically depressed" (E35). The losing of confidence was also mentioned by a number of interviewees and suggested a downward spiral of social contact and mental health and was also linked to lost status. "I don't find myself very free, as such. My movements are much calculated because I have lost confidence.....This is a different country, but instead of moving with my eyes, some two metres away from me, I move with my eyes, point it at say 100 metres, I don't want to meet anybody who might know me. Because they would hardly understand that things have changed. I mean that I am

trying the best I can to avoid people who may identify me. Because if I meet anybody who knows me and identifies me, it would mean trying to give assistance. In my country, I was assisting people” (E382). The effect of the asylum process and this lost status meant that “in my country I was healthy, I had good health, but when I entered here, my health some sort of fell and maybe it was some kind of psychological effects”.

Adjustment issues also led to high stress levels in many cases. Many interviewees referred to having decent lives in their country of origin, and contrasted that with difficulties here. “In my country, we never used to think about tomorrow and it wasn't that stressful, life was just going smoothly. Although you might be poor, you might not have sufficient food, but the beliefs that you have used to help you. Although you have the same beliefs, but when you are in a different situation, it just feels you're not the same person” (E536).

For others the liminality of their situation had profound impacts. One interviewee talked of having severe headaches as a result of stress which he put down to thinking too much about his situation (E460). Others were experiencing mental health problems as a result of being left destitute. “I don't have any accommodation and I have no support. I can't sleep in the street, I can die of starving in the street” (E606). The asylum process, both the length of it and the culture in which everything you say is treated with suspicion was seen as having a negative impact on mental health for E279-2. Having been in the system for some time without her case being concluded she was making a strategic decision to try and stay just below the radar. “If you remind you'd end up file open and they then see the bad thing about you”. Further she stated simply that “I am scared of asking and I'm scared of the answer they'll give me”. In a sense the inability to get on with her life and to try and bring her children here was almost a price worth paying to not have to deal with the UKBA.

Lack of employment for both asylum seekers and refugees was also seen as having a negative impact on the health of our respondents. Not only did inactivity lead to general health deterioration, this was particularly marked with regard to mental health (E657). One respondent stated that “Since I have been so desperate for a job and extremely disappointed and I have been so low emotionally” (E541). E279-2 talked of having started a form of vocational training but had dropped out due to health issues. However, she now felt more able to do so and had looked other possibilities.

The link between housing and health was also mentioned by a number of interviewees. One respondent talked of the negative impact homelessness had had on her child's health and the guilt this had subsequently left her with. “I had a problem back home.....since the day I came to the UK I've been having, you know, shades of problem, from one problem to

another, yeah. My baby, I remember when the baby was three months and I was homeless..... That was when the baby got this acute bronchitis, cold, and that was what led to asthma, yeah, because I was homeless twice” (E58). Getting a home made a substantive difference to this interviewees feelings of well-being. Another also referred to the health effects of poor housing. “My GP has given me medicine for my skin, but that’s also linked to the dampness. And then eye problems, I’ve had lots of drops put in my eyes” (E137).

Contact with ‘good people’ was viewed as the main positive that allowed people to feel better about their lives. These contacts often came via voluntary work and community organisations. E279-2 made reference to the contrast she experienced between these supportive contacts and the lack of support from the UK Government, particularly the Home Office. The former was viewed as something of a counter to the latter.

### **Conclusion**

Reasonable health is seen by many refugees and asylum seekers as a pre-requisite to broader integration. Respondents rate their health relatively highly, although there are gendered differences. There is also a concern that a significant minority indicate that their health has been deteriorating over the past six months to two years. Most respondents are registered with GPs while there is something of a shortfall in numbers registered with dentists due to dental care not necessarily being seen as preventative. Access issues on the whole are therefore not overly problematic, with some important exceptions. The main issue of concern is that of mental health. While mental health problems are under-reported, the indication is that there are real and continuing mental health issues among our entire sample, with women and those still in the asylum system at particular risk of mental health problems. There are many things that respondents feel negatively impact upon their mental health, including the asylum process, pre-flight experiences and social and economic isolation in Scotland. Such multi-dimensional problems suggest the need for multi-dimensional solutions.

## CHAPTER 7 - COMMUNITY AND NEIGHBOURHOOD

### Introduction

A key part of Ager and Strang's framework is that of community connections<sup>32</sup>. They describe these community issues as the way people experience integration. This is seen as concerning bonds (family and co-ethnic, co-national groups), bridges (links to other communities, such as neighbours), and links (to services and Government agencies). The concept of community itself is a contested one but one thing that is clear is that what happens within communities has a profound impact upon how people experience integration. This chapter begins by looking at the proximity of family as well as some of the family dynamics of refugees in Scotland. Included in this chapter is both the quantity and quality of friendships. It then goes on to look at both the concept of community and how community is experienced. This includes whether people feel part of the community where they live prior to discussion of the topical issue of community cohesion. This then leads on to discussion of neighbours and neighbourhoods. Finally there is some discussion regarding the degree to which respondents felt welcomed by the local population.

### Friends and Family

An important part of the bonds that are highlighted by Ager and Strang are friends and family as they provide the most immediate form of social support. One key issue that was repeatedly highlighted in terms of its effects on enabling or inhibiting the ability of asylum seekers and refugees to integrate is the degree to which they have familial support and contact in the country, city or neighbourhood. Linked to sense of belonging and to networks and well-being, access to family is highlighted as a key factor in enabling people to rebuild their lives. In Survey 1 we asked whether respondents had any family living in the city they live in, predominantly Glasgow, or in Scotland, or the UK.

**Table 29 – proximity of family – survey 1**

Any close family members living near?	Percent
In City	18.4%
In Scotland	13.5%
In the UK	22.7%
None	45.4%
Total	100%

These responses indicate that there are relatively large numbers of asylum seekers and refugees that lack access to family contact and support in the UK. There are also a significant number who have family members in other parts of the UK, but not in Scotland. This lack of family in many cases makes integration more problematic, from lack of close

<sup>32</sup> Ager and Strang 'Indicators of Integration', <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110218135832/http://rds.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs04/dpr28.pdf>

social bonds to support in relation to finances and childcare. Between Survey 1 and Survey 2 a number of respondents indicated that family members had moved from Glasgow to other parts of Scotland, exacerbating any concerns about social isolation and highlighting the important but under-researched issue of onward migration<sup>33</sup>.

The lack of family living locally and the importance of having family around was mentioned by a large number of interviewees at Stages 3 and 5 of the project. Indeed the issues had gained in importance as the research project moved on, perhaps due to a combination of family moving elsewhere and people getting status and wishing to bring family over to join them. Family was described as having both practical and symbolic importance and was not surprisingly linked to respondents' family units in their country of origin. One described his tight family unit in his home country. "It's a joint family, for example, we are four brothers, my mum and dad and they intended we all should live together, because if you see these are some wooden sticks, if you keep them together and make up a bundle, and so if we want to break that bundle it would be hard to break that one because they are in a unity. If they are spread out the one can be easily broken up. So this is the sign of un-unity and that bundle is the size of community" (E35). Thus, family was not only important as a source of strength and unity, it was also identified as the primary aspect or first point in belonging to a community. However, for those without familial links, loneliness could be an effect of lack of family. "To integrate it's okay but you feel...sometimes you feel like you're alone and you have to establish friends and all that but it's like okay. It's not easy to leave .... your family's not here, you know what I mean" (E144).

Refugees have a right to apply to bring their close family members to the UK on getting status. There is a process that refugees must go through and that process is fraught with difficulties<sup>34</sup>. However, there is something of a disjuncture between rights that exist and rights that are accessible and useable. Those trying to go through the family reunion process talked of its impact on integration and mental health. "What happens is that because my children are not here, I'm not all that happy at all. If I try to be happy I feel guilty. That here I am far away from my kids, I don't know if what I'm sending is adequate for my children. And then all of a sudden you shut in, even if you were smiling with your friends. You just suddenly withdraw" (E140). However, for this woman, one effect of the reunion process was that she had limited how many of her family she would now seek to bring to live with her due to rules concerning dependency as a pre-requisite for family reunion. "For now, I have downsized my family to, if I could just bring the two boys that are under 18. My girl is grown now to over 18. She's now 19. So for now that's something just that I have to put in a little

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<sup>33</sup> Part of this gap is being addressed in the following research project <http://www.onwardmigration.com/>

<sup>34</sup> Connel et al "One day we will be reunited" Experiences of Refugee Family Reunion in the UK [http://www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk/policy\\_and\\_research/research\\_reports/research\\_reports\\_archive](http://www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk/policy_and_research/research_reports/research_reports_archive)

box as much as it hurts me. I have to do that because to fight for them together, this government so far has told me we would rather your children stays in (Country of Origin) because we think we have reason to believe that they are independent of you. They are not independent of me” (E140). Others also mentioned the impact of not having their children with them. “I left my little girl, she was just two weeks old and my son was three, and now they are...the boy is eighteen and the girl is fourteen, you see how long that is?.....Never seen them, so I just need to get them, hug them” (E279).

Even with family here there is a profound adjustment issue for many refugee families. A number of respondents spoke of splitting from their partners after family reunion and alluded to changing power relations within families being the driver of such separation. In some cases adjustment to a new society was only possible if accompanied by adjustment in terms of power in those relationships. While this happened between partners, it was also evident in relationships between parents and children, many of whom appeared to want to live similar lifestyles to their Scottish friends but found that this clashed with their parents’ expectations of them. One respondent spoke at length regarding this issue. “My daughter, she wants to go with her friends on a weekly basis to the cinema.....I can't allow her because financial wise, and also I don't want her to learn things that will lead her to some other destinies that you never know where it will take her.....Although she thinks that she has ten Scottish friends that she's very, very close with them, but I tell her your friendship's fine but within the school, outside the school, that's it. Yeah. I might be mean but I'm not usually a rigid person but I feel that it might take her to some other steps that would lead us to problems” (E536). Another parent talked of issues in adjusting from a ‘joint family system’ to the UK system. “Here their joint family system is not clear. Although the children, sons and daughters, they look after their parents, but the parents live separately, although they are old whatever, they own home, their homes but they are living alone and you see the psychological problems are wandering around them they are depressed, they are everything, so those people are relying on the government support, or government social work department” (E35).

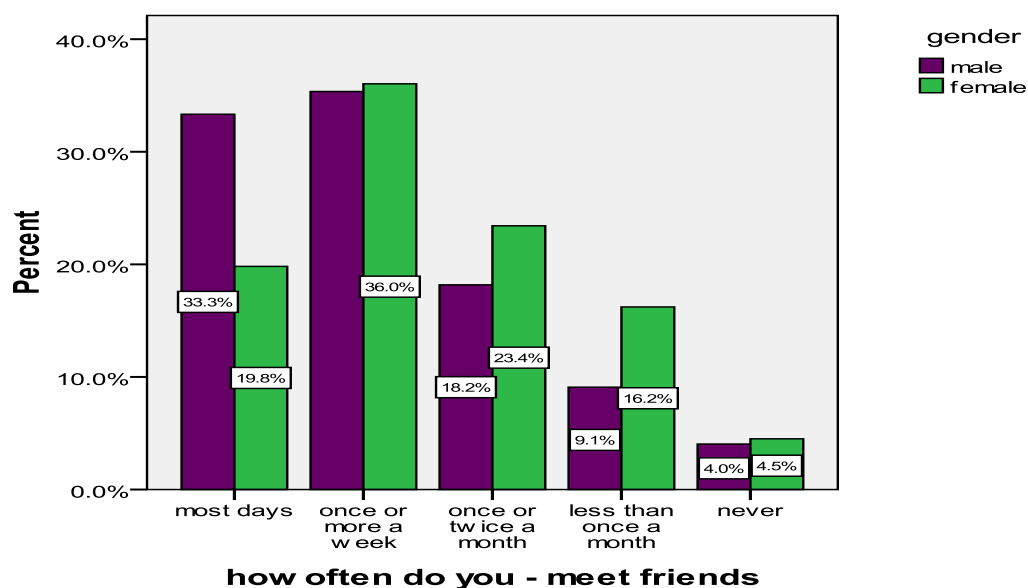
Thus family dynamics and support systems in Britain were seen as being very different from that of respondents’ countries of origin. One respondent stated that “You can see.....you live only with your daughter, you know, but in my country.....whole family can live together, eat together, but here's different.....you can say for example that we live another place, you live another place, or your daughter if she gets to eighteen she live another place .....But in my country if you get to eighteen or thirty or forty or fifty you can live with your parents” (E684).

To look in a little more detail at the issue of social isolation, we then asked how often respondents meet with relatives and friends. The numbers of respondents in each category are given in the table below.

**Table 30 – Regularity of contact with friends and family**

	Meet Relatives	Meet Friends
<b>Most days</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>Once or more a week</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>78</b>
<b>Once or twice a month</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>Less than once a month</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>Never</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>9</b>

A large proportion of respondents have regular contact with friends, important given the relative absence of family. However, there is a significant minority who appear to have little social contact with friends, indicating perhaps a substantial lack of friendships in general. It appears that some men are less isolated when it comes to meeting up with friends. 33% of men and just 20% of women meet friends on an almost daily basis. This might suggest that social isolation is more of an issue for women than men.



**Figure 25 – regularity of contact with friends by gender – Survey 1**

Friendships were identified by almost all respondents as being of huge importance to both integration and mental health. There are a wide variety of means by which people have successfully made and developed friendships. College classes, especially ESOL classes, were identified as a key source of friendships. These classes were also seen as an important cultural experience where, for example, people never before exposed to Chinese New Year could experience it for the first time (Far 27). These cultural exchanges served a number of purposes from new experiences to much greater inter-cultural understanding.



Voluntary work and some of the agencies providing services to asylum seekers and refugees were also seen as important. One man talked of voluntary organisations encouraging friendship and contacts but also expanding the experiences of asylum seekers and refugees, with trips to Oban and Stirling mentioned (E752). Another referred to his colleagues in his voluntary job as his family and talked of the everyday interactions that normalised his life here. With regard to developing friendships with Scottish people, volunteering was seen as important but so too was taking the time to talk to locals in the area in which people live. One respondent stated that “if you’re talking is better and you explain the Scottish people will listen and people open, people will welcome, it’s all right. Some people will say it’s okay and some people try to help you as well, and it gives you an impression like don’t worry” (E606). Another added that it is quite difficult initially to break the ice with Scottish people. Indeed a large number of interviewees talked of the perception of Scottish people being quite ‘closed’. It was felt that breaking through takes some time and some people give up prior to making any breakthrough. The majority however talked of being rewarded for perseverance by enduring friendships. One respondent told his story of the curiosity of Scottish people leading to greater understanding of the society he was integrating into. “They have an interest in you because now you're coming with a story, and it's a good story, you know what I mean. By creating that now, you're creating a very good relationship and that's why you create friends, that's why you create family, that's why you understand Scottish, that's when you understand local people, that's when you become like this is Glasgow, this is how they're .....they would come forward and say this is how we do things in Glasgow, this is how we live, our community do this, this is our law, this is our social life.....but it's hard to break that ice at that point, you know what I mean” (E144).

Churches and mosques were also mentioned as important places for making friends as well as for broader forms of social support. However, with regard to churches the different age profile of church goes against refugees meant there was some concerns that people were not mixing with others of their own age (E657, E750). With regard to support structures around Glasgow, a number of our interviewees mentioned Integration Networks as important. While one interviewee saw their role as important and useful, he also felt more could be done to support Networks in encouraging engagement (E752). E462 hinted at the problems in integrating into local communities in situations where they are regularly moving home. However, he also highlighted the crucial importance of local support in the form of integration networks, which he chose to access regardless of where in the city he lived. This continuity was felt to be a crucial counter to the relative change in all other parts of life.

However, some respondents felt that friendships developed tended to be of a fairly superficial type. There were a number of reasons for this. First, it was felt that there were cultural barriers to substantial and enduring friendships. For example, places to socialise and socialisation activities were seen as revolving around the consumption of alcohol, which made things difficult for those who do not drink and/or cannot afford to go out much. Secondly, there was fear and apprehension among interviewees both regarding making friendships, but also regarding going out more generally, which clearly limited on-going and profound contact. The openness of the individuals involved was also mentioned as having an important impact on friendship development. One said simply “you must be open to all people, if they are like help, you can discover a lot of opportunities in different ways, that’s why I am open to anybody, if you are good just with them” (E752).

Other respondents alluded to not being the type of person who trusts easily due to experiences in their flight or not being very sociable as reasons for a lack of friendships. One woman’s views were broadly typical regarding the unmet desire for deep friendships she stated that “As I told you, there is lack of friends, I mean real friends. I’ve got many people to say ‘hi, how are you, how are you doing’ that’s it. But close friends are difficult to find. Especially in the Scottish people. I’ve got two families, Scottish, or three families, friends, but you know, not real relationships.....Not a deep relationship. Just invite us, their kids and our kids play together. When I, for example, see her in the school and playground, just chat, that’s it. Not a real relationship when I need her to support me or advise me” (E33). This view was a common one and was linked to the issue of breaking through mentioned above. However, there is a clear temporal dimension to this process. For E33, by the time of Stage 5 of the research her outlook regarding friends had changed and she felt much more at ease and had more profound friendships. Friendships were, however, negatively impacted by lack of financial resources. Not being able to pay your way meant many respondents decided not to take up offers to socialise with friends. Some went as far as to avoid going out for a coffee for financial reasons (E108).

The nationality and/or ethnicity of friends varied widely. While some referred to 95% of friendships being with Scottish people, others indicated that most of their friends were co-nationals and/or refugees and asylum seekers. Such issues were not entirely temporal and thus not directly related to length of stay here. The bonds of co-ethnic or co-status communities often remain the main source of friendships and support for considerable periods of time. That said, the desire to make ‘Scottish’ friends is evident in almost all aspects of this research project. Thus both bonds and bridges have an impact on all other parts of peoples’ well-being.

### **Case study 9**

E432 is a man from the Middle East who arrived in Scotland in 2010. He has not had to go through the asylum process and has had permanent status from the outset. He has also lived in the same accommodation the whole time that he has been in Glasgow. He likes where he lives. He thinks the house is fine and the area is peaceful and safe and so he has no plans to move. He has his family here and feels that this has been crucial in allowing him to think about integration never try mind do it.

The regularity of contact E432 has with neighbours increased between survey 1 and survey 2. Despite this increase E432 feels that contact with neighbours is mostly superficial and thinks this is due to the busy lives that people here lead. He would like to know his neighbours more and thinks this will happen in time, but he does not feel he is being excluded as he sees his Scottish neighbours have little contact with each other. In that sense he feels that not knowing your neighbours very well is simply the culture here. Despite not being involved in many community activities he feels part of the community and feels that his community is also a cohesive one.

E432 thinks that both his wife and his children have integrated better than him. His children play with other children in the neighbourhood and he thinks women are more sociable so that despite not having as advanced language skills as him, his wife has made more neighbourhood friends. He talks of his first year here being about settling his family and dealing with the range of practical issues that he and his family encountered. The second year allowed more space to try to integrate. He sees a similar process with his friends from his country of origin. "You know when you plant a flower or a tree, and you see it's growing, that means conditions are right for that plant. I see my friends and their families are growing"

### **Community**

The concept of community and feelings of being part of a community are widely viewed as a key component of integration. Ager and Strang talk of the importance of bridges between refugee communities and other communities. In particular, neighbourhood is an important venue for this form of bridging. People are broadly more likely to feel integrated into a smaller spatial unit than a state or even a city, and the unit to which they feel or try to feel belonging is important. In Survey 1 any question that used the term community had a disproportionate number of respondents answering 'don't know'. While housing turnover may have been one of the reasons for this, meaning that people did not feel that they had lived in the area long enough to answer, it was decided that further research around the concept of community was important. It was important to try to understand how refugees and asylum seekers understand the very concept of community, that is, what they mean when they talk of community and to compare this to their 'Scottish' neighbours. Two workshops were held with residents in one community in Glasgow. The first was with a mix of asylum seekers and refugees and the second was with 'locals'.

In the workshop with asylum seekers and refugees on the meaning of community the first question for discussion concerned what words come to mind when they hear the term. Participants largely agreed that the main thing that they think of when they hear the word

community is people. They were asked to contribute wider thoughts under the heading of people and it was clear that the sharing of cultures and experiences along with space to meet were of most importance. Typical comments were 'gathering people in the same place to share their ideas' and 'space to make friends'. Although there was no spatial limit imposed on this discussion it became clear very quickly that it was immediate locality, or rather the people in it, that constituted community for respondents. Other than the issue of people, there were a number of additional factors that were key to community and these included initial support with orientation and help in learning and adapting to a new culture. On further discussion there was a notion of community not only being a collective term, but also that it was action orientated. Highlighting some problems in the locality, there was a strong feeling that the somewhat remote institutions of Government would take no notice of individuals and their complaints, necessitating mobilisation as a community as a problem solving function.

The second part of the workshop asked what an ideal community would look like. Participants added friends to the people element in part one of the workshop, highlighting the critical importance of people they feel close to in their ideal community. Building on the notion of collective action, the lack of affordable shops was raised and the solution posited was the local community establishing their own shops, along with other services. This discussion also touched upon the austerity measures currently underway, meaning existing and much needed leisure facilities were being cut at a time when they were needed for both health and socialising purposes. The key issue, therefore, concerned local people taking action to address local problems. This not only eased such problems but provided both catharsis and would create a snowball effect in tightening the community. Another thing raised that would make their community better were employment opportunities and links with institutions to be able to raise issues with state authorities, reflecting an existing sense of powerlessness.

The other main theme in this discussion concerned safety, particularly safe buildings and safe places for children to play. The views and concerns about safety belied the experiences of respondents. That is, most were concerned about safety but had never experienced any problems in the area regarding safety. The cleanliness of the area was related to safety in that it was felt that if people took more pride in the appearance of the area then they were less likely to create problems in the area.

A similar process was undertaken with the 'host' community in the same area of the same city and uncovered many similarities in views. The main initial difference concerned the people orientated nature of communities that it was felt had been lost within 'Scottish' communities. One respondent, to the agreement of many other participants, talked of what

had been lost with regard to a sense of community and alluded to the fact that among refugees there was that sense of community that they could learn from. There appear to be two contradictory processes occurring simultaneously. Locals feel that they want to re-establish a sense of community which they see in asylum seeker and refugee communities, yet asylum seekers and refugees view locals as having little contact with one another and view integration as a process whereby they adopt such behaviours. Thus the desire is to move in opposite directions and conceivably passing one another on the way. There was more urgency in the host community regarding the notion of coming together collectively but there was a feeling that this required support. That is, it could not be entirely organic.

A visual representation of these discussions is seen in figure 26 below.



**Figure 26 – Ketso community workshops**

One major difference in the host community responses was that there was more attention paid to the interactions between people and place. It was not just people in an area that made a community but the interactions between them. This was at least partly due to the relative stability in the lives of the host community in comparison to asylum seekers and refugees. The ideal community was one with these interactions that was also clean and safe. Having local representatives, perhaps through community councils, was also highlighted, signalling agreement regarding the need to have access to institutions as a collective.

However, many community problems from youth behaviour to cleanliness were seen as being about lack of employment.

Beyond the community workshops, the issue of community was also evident in interviews in stages 2 and 5 of the research. Many of those in interviews talked primarily about how to improve their communities, and such improvements tended to refer to inter-personal contacts. E432 described a 'better' community as one where a locality is a "more harmonised, mixed community where everybody understands everybody else. And where you feel safe, where you feel you can go out, stay late.....like your children can go to the playground and you don't have any worries for them being hurt or anything. So that's a good definition of community". He also referred to what he saw as other communities that he was involved with. These include a refugee community organisation as well as to a lesser degree his voluntary activities. Thus for him community was primarily but not entirely spatial.

E572 located community as an entirely spatial entity. He saw the terms community and neighbourhood as being interchangeable. Part of his spatial view of community came from his experiences with groups of people from his country of origin. Refugees from his country of origin were split between pro and anti-Government and so he felt the result was that there was not one national community from his country of origin, but at least two. E572 also looked towards what would make his local community better. "Just cooperate each other and have friends and to know each other". E462 agreed, seeing community as entirely concerning the locality where you live, primarily about the people within that locality. He went on to volunteer what would make that locality better. "If it's possible just to make a way that people can know each other, you know, you can know your neighbour". Community events such as refugee week <sup>35</sup>and those organised by integration networks were then mentioned as the only present avenues for such contacts, and the infrequent nature of them highlighted as a problem.

Another respondent combined a localised view of community with a religious one (E532). She felt that her church was an important community that provided both emotional and social forms of support. "I think community for me is a group of people that work together, that shares the burden...of one another, as a group. And having one mind yeah. I think that's how I see communities".

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<sup>35</sup> Refugee week is an arts, cultural and educational festival that brings together people and organisations to celebrate the contribution of refugees to the UK, and encourage better understanding between communities  
[http://www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk/news\\_and\\_events/refugee\\_week\\_scotland/background\\_to\\_refugee\\_week\\_scotland](http://www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk/news_and_events/refugee_week_scotland/background_to_refugee_week_scotland)



One respondent talked of community or bonds in relation to concentric circles. “Community.....firstly your family, your home, that’s the community, when you are together family, that’s your small community and when you expand, when you go out from your home then the neighbours and then the whole street, that’s your community and when you talk about village wise or city wise, then it is expanding and expanding they become community” (E35).

Beyond definitions or its component parts, we also wanted to ascertain the level of belonging people felt to the locally defined space. In Survey 1 we asked whether people feel part of the community in which they live, and also whether they feel part of any other communities in the city in which they live. With regard to local communities, a significant minority felt some sense of belonging while an almost equal number were not sure how to answer this question. This also indicates, however, that 20% of the sample does not feel part of the local community.

**Table 31 – Do you feel part of the community where you live? – Survey 1**

<b>Do you feel part of the local community where you live?</b>	<b>Percent</b>
yes	<b>40.8</b>
no	<b>20</b>
don't know	<b>39.2</b>
Total	<b>100</b>

There were no significant differences in the answering of this question by status, which may be somewhat surprising given the fact that asylum seekers do not have any choice in terms of where they live. There was, however, a gender dimension whereby a significantly larger proportion of men felt that they were part of the community than women, 46.6% against 34.1%. In comparing this to Go-Well results, we see that a range of responses, from 52% to 81% in Go-Well study areas felt part of their community. Among those being definite in their responses, our sample shows less feeling of belonging than any of their study areas, and is significantly less than the 88% response in English regeneration areas highlighted by Go-Well.

The importance of sources of support, most particularly community support, was alluded to by a number of our interviewees as explaining some of this lack of belonging. One talked of the need, especially when going through difficult or traumatic experiences, for people around you that can help. He stated “sometimes they say there is no place like home, when you are stressed sometimes. That’s what I would say, it’s good if you find good people around you, give you some support. But if maybe they are doing bad things, you feel like abandon it, like you are not valued, that’s why we try to be in a community. If you’re environment is good that will keep your mind maybe good, but if you find some neighbour bad you see is not

good” (E752). Many respondents pointed to the need to work a bit at both feeling and being part of the community (E536). The onus was seen as being on the refugees themselves to make contact. One, for example, stated that “Because this is community, they're living their life. It's about me getting involved with them; it's not about them worried about me” (E144). However, there was also an element of fear in terms of taking that first step as well as feeling that community contact is not something that happens in Scotland.

With regard to being involved with other communities in the city they live in, there were even higher numbers who said that they were not, some 24.5% of those who answered the question.

**Table 32 – do you feel part of any other communities? – Survey 1**

<b>Do you feel part of any other communities in the city in which you live?</b>	<b>Percent</b>
yes	<b>30.0</b>
no	<b>24.6</b>
don't know	<b>36.4</b>
Total	<b>100</b>

For those who said that they did feel part of some other community in the city in which they live, there were a wide variety of communities mentioned. These included local integration networks, Refugee Community Organisations, church groups and social activity groups such as fishing and hiking groups. In survey 2 we asked if there was anything that prevented people feeling part of their local community. Almost half were not sure if there was any one thing but just under a quarter gave some details of things they felt inhibited their ability to feel some degree of belonging. There were a number of issues mentioned from spending all of your time in church to language. The one institutional issue raised was that it was not possible to feel part of the community until you were on a level with other people living there, and this could only come through accessing citizenship rights.

While various voluntary jobs were widely mentioned as sources of friendship and even community (E460), the absence of paid work was a key factor in inhibiting the creation of social circles and making people feel part of the community in which they live. “If we could integrate in some way like work, that’s how we can socialise with people. At school, work, in society” (E681). One man stated that, “I think you feel a part of the community when you are working..... working full-time you think yourself a part of the community but when you are not working, just sitting in the house or just going to the college or something you feel yourself you are not useful for the country”(E38). He went on that “You have to feel as if you are useful, you are doing something. If just sitting in the house or just going to the college to pass the time and learning something I think that’s not... sometimes when I’m in the college they say all my class-mates are only 16/17 years. I’m 26 years and I say to myself, what am



I doing here? I should be working. Another related this to both work and other aspects of society, "I'd like to enter your society" (E33), with the implication that there were employment barriers that were preventing this from happening.

It was generally felt that things were progressing in terms of relationships in the city. "I'm better, much better than the first year. The first year a big shock, wow. A new environment, new people, new culture, everything new. It was very difficult to adapt. But now I can say, I'm very confident to speak to anyone and try to smile and make a relationship....I think a close friend is a kind of fortune when you need someone. Not just need, just to feel someone loves you, protects you, always tries to be with you in difficult times and enjoy with you" (E53).

### Case study 10

E460 is a woman from central Africa who arrived in 2003 and was in the asylum process during the first 4 parts of this research project, only getting status shortly before interview 2. That means she was in the asylum process for almost eight years. Although she feels relatively satisfied and safe in her neighbourhood in both surveys she said that she would like to move. By the time of interview 2 she had moved to a new area and likes her new neighbourhood more than the old one. She has also had more neighbourhood contact in her new area but she still feels that contacts are a little superficial. She says simply that the 'living style' is less open here than what she is used to.

E460 has no family in the United Kingdom. She has regular contact with friends and had some limited neighbourhood contact in her old home (it was too early to assess this in her new home). She volunteers regularly in her local community but does not feel part of that community and being quite new to the area is unsure whether she thinks that community is a cohesive one. However, she does feel she belongs to the community she volunteers with and that group is her main form of social support. Her new area also has an active integration network, which she thinks are very important in enabling newcomers to meet people in a new community. She also thinks other community events as well as refugee week are very important in creating contact between people within localities. Although E460 feels that community means the locality where you live, E460 felt integrated in the city prior to getting status, due primarily to her voluntary work.

### Cohesion

One of the primary issues pertaining to communities in recent years has been the notion of community cohesion. Much of the political and academic interest emerged from an assumption that ethnic minority communities had little contact and were living parallel lives<sup>36</sup>, an idea refuted by a number of studies<sup>37</sup>. Nevertheless it remains an important barometer of community connections. A key question about perceptions of community cohesion, or neighbourhood cohesion, concerns whether people within that spatial unit get on well together. We asked this standard question in Survey 1 with the following results.

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<sup>36</sup> Philips 'After 7/7: Sleepwalking to segregation'  
<http://www.humanities.manchester.ac.uk/socialchange/research/social-change/summer-workshops/documents/sleepwalking.pdf>;

<sup>37</sup> Finney and Simpson Sleepwalking to Segregation?: Challenging Myths About Race and Migration; Dorling  
[http://sasi.group.shef.ac.uk/publications/2007/dorling\\_a\\_think\\_piece\\_for\\_cioc.pdf](http://sasi.group.shef.ac.uk/publications/2007/dorling_a_think_piece_for_cioc.pdf)

**Table 33 – Is this a neighbourhood where those with different backgrounds get on well? – Survey 1**

<b>Do you agree that this neighbourhood is a place people with different backgrounds get on well?</b>	<b>Percent</b>
agree	<b>48.2</b>
disagree	<b>15.8</b>
don't know	<b>36.0</b>
Total	<b>100.0</b>

Just under 50% of the overall sample feel that their neighbourhood could be described as one in which people from different backgrounds get on well together, with a large 36% not being sure how to answer the question, the main reason for the workshops highlighted above. Just under 16% of respondents were clear that they disagreed that their neighbourhoods could be described in this way. Taking out those who felt that they could not or did not wish to answer the question, the figures compare unfavourably with the overall Scottish population in the 2010 Scottish Social Attitudes survey which saw 25% definitely agree and just under 61% tend to agree. The Go-Well study makes a point about passive cohesion that is also of relevance to the work being done here. That is, when feeling part of the community is looked at alongside questions on social harmony, the results may suggest a passive rather than active form of community cohesion, and might suggest some problems in terms of inter-group engagement. A number of respondents alluded to this passive form of cohesion in their neighbourhoods, but did so in a very unproblematic way. While saying they felt their neighbourhoods were cohesive, some also followed up questions asking for examples or explanations by saying that they had not experienced any problems (E460). In this sense lack of any overt problems are seen as representing cohesion. However, there is a correlation between those who feel part of the communities in which they live and those who feel that their communities are ones in which people from different backgrounds get on well together. That is not to say that the relationship is a linear one, as shown in the graph below. The vast majority of people who answered both questions and felt that they belonged to their local community also felt that that community was one where people with different backgrounds get on well together.

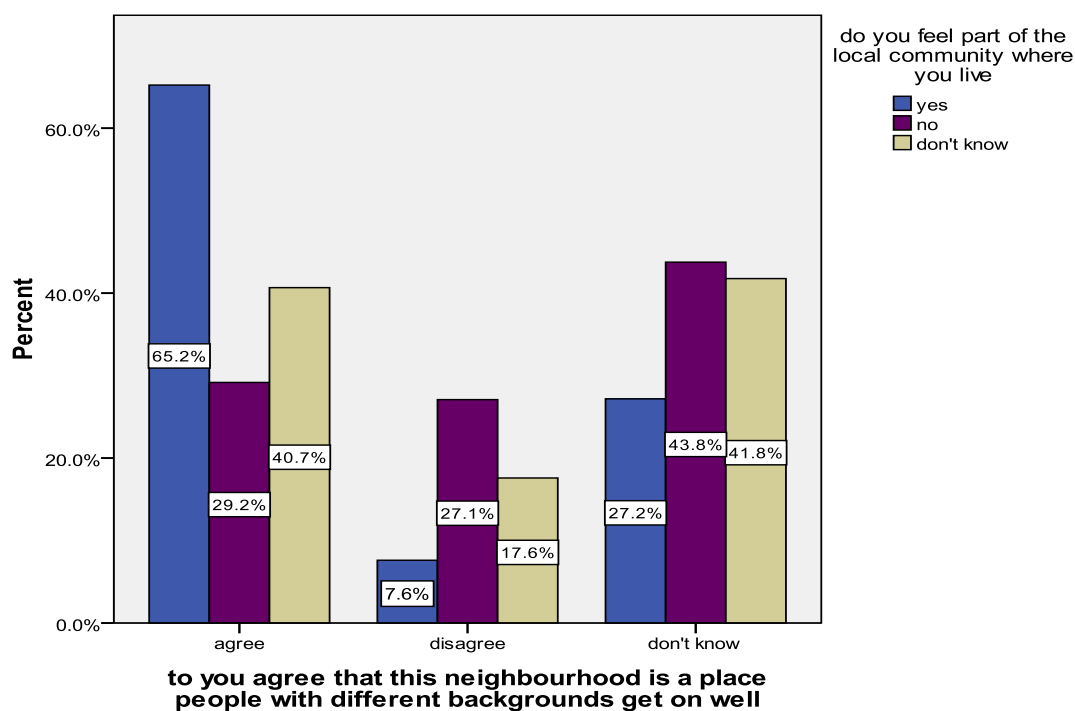


Figure 27 – Community Cohesion and feeling part of the community

There was a fairly widespread view that things had improved in terms of community cohesion over the period in which respondents had lived here. One respondent, for example, felt that the increasing multicultural nature of Scotland was having a positive impact in his community, arguing that “it was very white when I arrived but thankfully I think more people are coming in. I’ve seen quite a few blacks and they will say hello, hello when you pass by. I smile and I feel happy. But generally it’s a community that if you didn’t make noise, they didn’t make noise at you. Simple and straightforward as that” (E140). Another agreed that increasing multiculturalism was having a positive effect on cohesion. “This is a place that I would call home, I think it’s more...it’s becoming more friendly, it’s becoming a place, and they’re holding together hands to be able to support each other” (E279). There was also a view expressed by a number of respondents that there is simply more understanding now of who refugees are and why they are here and with that, overt discrimination had decreased.

### Neighbours

While general friendships are of huge importance, so too are contacts within the areas in which people live as this is what provides for the linking social connection highlighted by Ager and Strang. Both the levels and depth of contact play a crucial role in inculcating any nascent sense of belonging within a specific geographic community. In Survey 1 we asked a number of questions about contacts and activities within neighbourhoods and communities. One of these questions concerned how often people speak with their neighbours. The results show a very split picture whereby some people have regular contact and some lack any such contact.

**Table 34 – Regularity of contact with neighbours – Survey 1**

How often do you speak to Neighbours	Number
Most days	42
Once or more a week	37
Once or twice a month	30
Less than once a month	51
Never	48

There were therefore quite mixed perspectives about neighbours among respondents in our interviews. While many respondents had little interaction with neighbours and generally explained this with reference to the busy lives of their neighbours (E750), others identified individual neighbours with whom they had developed good friendships (E752). Some told of stories of helpful neighbours who have been welcoming and open. Others did not mention help so much as general friendliness. “All my neighbours are my friends, they invite us to their home for dinner, they come to our home for parties, we get together most of the time during the week, you know, even my old neighbours” (E541). This man considered himself to be a very social person and made the point of inviting all of his neighbours to his home the week he moved in, and things just progressed since then. Another respondent talked of friendliness with neighbours reducing stress levels. However, this individual referred to initial difficulties due to lack of English language proficiency (E751). As language has improved so have relationships with neighbours. Indeed some interviewees talked of contact with neighbours having a discernible impact on language skills (A75). This was a way to learn new words and accents. Indeed almost 36% of respondents who are very confident speaking English speak with their neighbours most days and 80% of those who are not at all confident ever speak with their neighbours, although this latter figure comes from low response numbers.

There were also a number of more specific examples of friendliness with neighbours. One spoke of the normality of his relations with his neighbours. “Sometimes I'm invited round to watch the football....., cos I have not got a box..... because I like the football and (neighbours name) I'm going to come round to see you and I go to watch football with him if he's there” (E684). Another woman mentioned a friendly if somewhat distant relationship with her neighbours. However, when her husband was somewhat unwell, she was surprised that neighbours knocked on the door as they hadn't seen him for a time and were concerned. “To be honest there is a lot of Scottish people they are very, very good, very nice people” (A75).

Another respondent gave an interesting story that touched on the stigma attached to asylum seekers but gave a hopeful perspective with regard to neighbourliness. “The way they talk to you, they definitely know you’re an asylum seeker, but still they talk to you as a friend, they talk to you as if we’ve known each other for a long time..... So when they brought me to where I am living now..... the Scottish man live opposite my building, when he discovered I have a baby, I don’t have a TV, I don’t have anything, and he told me, I have a small TV, do you mind, because of the baby, he said, so that the baby would be able to look at the TV so that I wouldn’t be bored” (E58). The view that media induced stigma created problems was a widely held one. In some cases this produced misconceptions that could not be countered but in others such as the respondent above, personal contact countered this stigma.

E462 also alluded to the superficial but friendly relationships with neighbours. He said they are always polite and say hello but that it seldom if ever went beyond that and developed into meaningful friendships. However, E462 was also clear that this takes time and his experience of not staying in one community for any length of time had inhibited the development of real friendships with neighbours. He did, however, feel that this would happen eventually.

Time was seen as having an effect among many of our interviewees. “They greet me, I greet them. I stay in a tenement, it’s quiet. There’s flats across the road, whatever they say I don’t answer so they’ve gotten used to me. I’ve lived in that area for a year now. They see me, I see them, they’re beginning to smile at me for now. Really the old ones, I think they’re used to seeing my face. As I am passing, hello, hello.....It’s taken a year for them to get used to me passing every day .....They are now beginning to smile at me. They’re now beginning to feel I’m a part of them” (E140). Temporal issues have clear impacts on neighbourhood integration. E432 gave a sequential outline of how refugees can become integrated. “The first year I was more busy with my family, trying to settle them, trying to make them feel safe, make them feel at home and everything. But this year, I did apply for language courses”. Not surprisingly there is a temporal dimension to many neighbourhood experiences. “You move to an area, maybe get a few difficulties in the beginning, and then....you get used to the people and the people get used to you” (E536). Among those who felt that they did have contact with neighbours, many relationships with were seen as being very superficial in nature. One man liked his neighbourhood and felt that the facilities were good, but “our neighbour, no relationship at all. Just hi, bye, how are you doing, that’s it” (E33).

The superficial nature of neighbourhood contact often located in the busy lives of those neighbours. “I don’t want to intrude to their lives” (E535). This desire not to be pushy or

intrude led to many following the lead of their neighbours in the sense of not attempting any more than superficial contact. Some talked of not knowing their neighbours at all. "Honestly I don't know anybody...because everyone is busy and everybody closes his door on his-self so there is now communication between each other" (E38). He went on that "I don't mean they're unfriendly, because I didn't talk to them to know friendly or unfriendly, but just I said, nobody see other...maybe everybody is busy working, studying, so you don't meet each other even in the stairs". It was widely considered that people are simply too busy to stop and communicate with neighbours (E137). For most this wasn't viewed as a refugee specific issue as those from the host community were not seen to have good relations with one another either. "People are scared of each other. The way the homes are.....move to your home, you lock your door, you are inside there. But in Africa, it's not so..... here you don't greet, you mix, you enter the lifts, you meet somebody there, you don't talk to him. But in Africa, you see when you go to Africa, you feel like everybody knows you and you know everyone. But here, you're scared" (E382).

Another respondent argued that, "there's no sense of neighbour in here. You don't know your neighbours, there's no relationship. Maybe the maximum you can say hi, hello..... but you came to a new society and you have to accept it as it is, you can't do anything about it. Although first few months and years, maybe a year or two, I was trying to be more open to my neighbours but I don't feel that people welcome that (E536). This view of integrating by not having substantive contact with neighbours was also mentioned by another interviewee. "It's about the cultural difference. Some people don't feel there's rules in this country whereby you have to be careful, and that careful thing, you know what I mean, watching people what they are doing" (E144).

Integration in some cases therefore came to be seen as mimicking the non-neighbourliness of their Scottish neighbours. Many referred to integration as taking on the behaviours of the host society. One man compared Scottish neighbourhoods to country of origin neighbourhoods. "It's not the same, because in my country of origin, we have friends, neighbours, talking, chatting etc. But here you can understand because everybody, as I said, is working. Everybody got his time. Everybody busy. Really I don't... for ten months I know only one who is close to me, my neighbour, near to my flat. That's all" (E38). He then felt that to integrate was to imitate the behaviours of their neighbours. He went on, "you have to be integrated, you know? This is what we are talking about, integration. So you have to follow the system of the country. We have to follow, so this is the system so you have to go on". E432 showed high levels of satisfaction with his neighbourhood. "It's a very nice area, it's a very nice community...it's nice, quiet, the people are friendly". However, he went on to highlight that friendliness and friendship are not the same thing. "I cannot say that I've

started solid friendship relations with neighbours.....people here are always running...trying to meet, make things work for them....I have a certain lifestyle, my neighbours have a different lifestyle". He later went on to add that he longed to get to know the culture here but felt he had been unable to do so as yet. E532 also talked of this mimicking of behaviour that might be seen as somewhat atomistic. "The first time when I arrived here, I used to greet people whenever I meet them in the street.....I've stopped. I'm like I'm now Scottish here! I do like the Scottish do". This led to her primarily keeping any contacts to her immediate family.

Although relations with neighbours could be partly explained by the length of time people had stayed in the area, it is worth highlighting the number of times people moved home between surveys, meaning time in the area cannot explain any increase in neighbourhood contact. Looking at Survey 1 and Survey 2 matched responses, it appears that rather than increased neighbourhood contact being a result of housing issues, it seems more related to status and the increased number of respondents getting status during the course of the research. It may be that respondents have more time and self-confidence as a result of getting status and this has a knock-on effect in terms of neighbourhood contact.

Views of neighbours and neighbourhoods are largely informed by comparisons made with those in country or region of origin. "In Africa, you know, you know all your neighbours, it's not like here, you know, we are, you are in your flat, you know, the door is always closed" (E460). Many respondents talk of coming from countries where neighbours all know one another and are even an extended support network and they compared their experiences here. Many respondents compared the neighbourliness of their new neighbourhoods very poorly when compared to that they had left behind. One said "you know in my country you can see everybody, yeah. You know the person who lives there" whereas in Glasgow, "you can live in the building, two years, three years, you can't see your neighbours for three or four years" (E460). "In our countries I think we are very close to each other" (E751). One talked of his long experiences of living in various Middle Eastern countries and felt that in those countries there were "very joined" neighbourhoods (E34).

Therefore the issue of adjusting to the levels of neighbourhood contact was an important one. E572 talked of the norm in his country of origin whereby "it is very common to your neighbour even to knock at his door and say hello, how are you? I don't know here. If you maybe knock someone, it may offend him or not". He added that the reason he did not know how such behaviour would be looked upon was because of the invisibility of general neighbourhood interactions. The work patterns of neighbours and the weather were the

primary factors in creating this invisibility. However, he also felt that the weather was not an insurmountable obstacle and that spaces can and should be created to facilitate contact.

The weather was seen as having quite a profound impact on neighbourhood contact in many cases. One talked of the increased social interaction during periods of good weather. "Because in the summer people are outside and gardening and its sunny and they're having a drink at the weekend and stuff" (E606). Another interviewee agreed saying, "like yesterday we have a nice weather I have been outside and the same neighbours from the same building.....they have been outside as well because nice weather they start chat" (A75). "If the weather is very bad, the chance of meeting those people is zero" (E144). In some cases the importance of children to integration interacts with the weather to promote contact. "When the weather is good, the sunshine etc, maybe you can see children playing in the street, the mum standing.....but when the weather is bad you don't see them. Everybody inside the house" (E38).

The corollary to these periods of interaction was the long winter months when "everyone would be rushing into the house to be warm" (E750). One said "the weather is nice, everybody, they want to come out and you can see each other" (E460). Another talked of going long months during the winter without seeing any neighbours. E532 reiterated this issue of the effect of the weather on contact. While arguing that being outside is not usually very comfortable she therefore felt that support organisations creating indoor space was invaluable. The weather was also referred to as having an impact on integration by E432. He felt that on warm days there is more neighbourhood contact. "I see it with my own family. When the weather is good, we go out...and everybody else does the same".

E137 also talked of the lack of meaningful neighbourhood contact but saw this as unproblematic. "The neighbours, there is no problem in my area because everything is doing what they want, everything is free, everyone is free. But we don't talk with neighbours.....because everyone is busy". This perspective hints at the issue of passive cohesion mentioned above. While he sought cross cultural contact, this was achieved through volunteering rather than through neighbourhood contact.

### **Neighbourhood**

Integration was seen by our participants as something that occurs at a smaller spatial unit than city or country, but instead in a specific locality. One of our respondents stated simply that "myself I think the integration comes first of all from yourself also and your neighbour. My experience if they move us to a new home, if you have good neighbour that will make you good and the area, if the area is also good it will make you feel good also. But if the area is bad and the neighbour is bad you see all things bad can happen also" (E752). In a



sense the community exists only in the immediate contact you have in your neighbourhood. Another felt that the city was the most important venue for determining sense of belonging and local integration. “I always like Glasgow and I’m happy in here it’s like, like I can say, people say like it’s my second home, I can say like my first home.....because I come in like a young age and I get used to in here.....for me it’s like I was coming here, when I come in here seventeen year old and I spend eleven year in here so just like most of my age I spend in here as well like” (E430).

Although there are strong crossovers with neighbours, neighbourhoods also have aspects beyond interpersonal contacts with neighbours. In Survey 1 we asked about social activities, particularly those at the local level. The results in the table below indicate that although large numbers of respondents are involved in some community based activities and/or perform some voluntary work, there are also a large number who appear not to be involved in any local activities at all.

**Table 35 – involvement in local community**

	Attend local events	Attend community meetings	Volunteer locally
<b>Weekly</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>Monthly</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Once every few months</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>A couple of times a year</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Never</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>98</b>

Asylum seekers appear to attend local events more than refugees, perhaps in part due to their lack of cash to move around the city and/or the fact that they are concentrated in areas where other asylum seekers also live and where there are established support mechanisms.

However, there were also numerous instances of behaviour that discouraged community involvement. A number of participants had experienced racist harassment in their neighbourhood. One referred to having been mugged twice and called racist names (E657). This led him to hoping to move to a new area. The culture of many of these communities was mentioned in a negative light. One said, “I have a problem with drunk people especially in my neighbourhood....and I would say I scared to go out at night, even after two years and I try to don’t go out on weekends, especially at night” (E529). The fear some people have in their neighbourhoods was even more so when people worried about their children. “You are scared for your kids all the time, when they are coming from school, their schools are not far but you’re not really sure what will happen when they are on their way home you know” (E750). Another, who had rated his neighbourhood highly and who said that he had never experienced discrimination later told of having been attacked by three drunks. He also alluded to more casual bigotry whereby he is regularly sworn at. When asked about whether

these are ever reported to the police, his answer was similar to the feeling mentioned by others. He didn't report this as he didn't "want to create problems with the neighbours" (E137).

Some of the problems in neighbourhoods were looked at in quite a philosophical way. One referred to moving new communities into poor neighbourhoods who were uneasy with the newcomers as the source of any problems. "Scottish people it's like the poor people do you know what I mean, and bringing the poor people into an immigrant area, that would be scary you know, not everyone can deal with that situation and even when you come into Red Road from the YMCA bus stop, when you come into the bus stop I realise there are Scottish people on the bus, people are just not happy because of these people, because immigration people you don't know the Scottish society. Some people come onto the bus talking a different language and doing stuff and it's not unusual in the Scottish society and it makes some people angry, and even if you are born here, people in Scotland they don't have experience in immigration and stuff" (E606). As mentioned above, feelings about housing and neighbourhoods were often seen as being interchangeable. One participant spoke of having in the past lived in a nice house with good neighbours and stated that, "location has an effect, bad area bad area and a good area is a good area" (E35).

Others felt that there had been significant progress in their neighbourhoods. For example, one man told us "the area is good, before it was bad but now because the Strathclyde Police they make good progress there also, and the area is quite good" (E752). Added to this, there was a feeling that relationships with neighbours had also improved. Many others agreed that general racism had reduced over the time that they had been in their area and/or Glasgow. Indeed in Survey 2 the level of neighbourhood contact appears to have increased. The number of respondents who took part in both surveys who said that they never speak with their neighbours halved between the time of the first and second survey.

Others simply felt that their neighbourhoods were good places to live. "I guess because they are friendly, you know, when you are in the midst of people that loves you, that they don't discriminate, you know, you feel relaxed, you feel at home" (E58). Another man stated that "that's my second address in this neighbourhood and I haven't had any problems with the neighbours. They are welcoming, they speak and they ask how you are" (E137).

In questions about what people feel is missing from their neighbourhoods the main response, not surprisingly, concerned social circles from their country of origin. One said "family missing, friends missing, social life missing" (E35). The fact that he had quite a large co-ethnic community in Glasgow did mitigate these feelings to some degree but he, like

many other respondents, felt that there was an important element missing in his neighbourhood which boiled down to the people you feel close to and can rely on.

### **Welcome and the Attitudes of the Local Population**

Another important aspect of integration, as has been hinted at throughout this report, are the barriers that people can encounter in their attempts to integrate. These barriers are often of a more systemic or institutional variety but also concern the ways people either do or do not welcome asylum seekers and refugees into their neighbourhoods and communities. One respondent differentiated a couple of unwelcoming incidents involving young people from an overall warm welcome. "Although they're minor or...minor occasions or minor incidents, but...because it does affect you, you just focus on them. But Glasgow is overall, or generally is a welcoming place. Because some people, especially older people, they...even if you ask them for directions, they go with you, they make sure that you reach the place where you're wanting. Yeah, and that's very, very nice attitude. Yeah, so it's not fair that we focus on what a small group of children are doing" (E536). Another felt that things were ok but that much work remained to be done to overcome remaining discriminatory attitudes and behaviour. "People have been really friendly....And those who were bad people, meaning racist people, have been told about the situation, about who we are, and I don't blame them, they'd never seen people like us, but the more they learn about us the more racists... When I just arrived I felt racism in most every way, but now I don't even hear about it" (E279). Another added "I wouldn't say it's different or it's not welcoming, I would say it might be, but it needs more time for someone to understand" (E144). E532 talked of some experiences of overt discrimination, of people shouting abuse, "I hate you. Go back to your country". However, on the whole these experiences were very rare. She explained these views by reflecting on the uncertainty people feel in their own lives. "Like for example, it's now there is a scarcity job thing, and then all of a sudden they see people also coming in".

Others were more unequivocal in arguing that people had been very welcoming to them. "The people are friendly because I live in Glasgow so the people are friendly, you know? And sometimes when you meet someone just even you don't know him, he wanted to know him. 'Where are you from? What are you doing?' So people are friendly, more friendly, you know? And if you want any help you can ask someone something and he can help you, you know?" (E38).

The view that things had improved over the years was articulated by a number of interviewees. One spoke of some serious cases of discrimination some years ago but suggested that as people have become more used to multicultural neighbourhoods, things have improved. "In the beginning when we come into Glasgow it happened a lot. But not at

the moment” (E430). Another added that “since I came I saw progress for on the bus for example.....I think day my day we are living together” (E752).

Others expressed the view that like all places there are good and bad people leading to good and bad experiences. “Of course a lot of foreign people are here like myself and I know a lot of people doesn't...don't like this because I know they are thinking we are using their right maybe and we are using their opportunity for work, for college, for everything and I think it's normal a lot of people don't like... however they are so kind and they accept everything” (E529). Another added that “Some of our people even were racist. That's natural. In every country you can say this, I don't know why. Some people don't like another, they say, "he's different". I don't know why. That's very natural, I think” (E681).

However, there were also views that asylum seekers are still seen in a very negative light. One respondent commented that “When you are here, you're not able to communicate with other people because first, you know, they have a different imagination in their mind when they see you. When you tell them more about your situation, they will understand about your asylum and they have a bad picture in their mind of asylum seeker people..... they think an asylum seeker is a bad person, maybe. Actually, I don't have any definition of that, to tell you or I'm not able to write a good word for what is in their minds, but they have a bad reflection in their mind when I say I'm an asylum seeker or a refugee” (E681). With regard to why people think these attitudes prevail one interviewee strongly argued that the way the media portray asylum seekers had a real impact. “Yeah but they don't know, they think it's like tarring everybody in the same brush.....Just like if I say oh if it's one people swear at me in the street I say oh they are Scottish people are like this.....You cannot say like this, maybe that's happened one person, two person, three person, is everybody no the same, it's all different” (E430).

The view of a welcome being slightly mediated by the media was also expressed by other respondents. “It was not easy to be welcomed by Britain, because you see all the time the matter for asylum seekers and refugees. All negative things they were saying to asylum seekers..... On the News, you see around Britain, not only here around Britain. You see when some time the people were doing bad things in London for bombing, you see all bad things they were saying it's because asylum seekers are here. But we are totally different, that's why I can say it was not easy” (E752). Another said that without the support received they would have been stateless. “you come from another country and they give you stateless... you survive same as the British man. That's a good welcoming for me. This is... this is the biggest things that you can see” (E38). E462 referred to the views of the Scottish population concerning asylum seekers and refugees being the result of ignorance. While he

talked of being viewed as a dirty person and a criminal he went on the “I don’t blame them” as that is what they are told.

### **Conclusion**

What happens within the communities in which people live, as well as the forms of social support available are of profound importance in enabling people to integrate. In this regard the vast majority of respondents in this research project lack any family in the UK and so are without a vital form of social support. This means that other forms of social support, or of socialising more generally, are therefore of even more importance. Most of the participants in this project indicate that they have fairly regular contact with friends, although there is a significant minority who appear to lack friendships to a certain degree. Neighbourliness has also emerged as an important issue and views of neighbourhoods are somewhat mixed. Although large numbers indicate satisfaction with their neighbourhood there are many who lack much contact with neighbours. This is of importance due to the fact that the majority view community and integration as concerning the area in which they live. Therefore, to feel integrated and/or part of the community requires identification with the locality. What we have found is that some refugees and asylum seekers indicate good, positive relationships with neighbours while others, even those who are happy with their neighbourhood, have very little contact. The latter is seen as passive cohesion whereby lack of overt problems is taken as representing cohesive communities.

## **CHAPTER 8 - INTEGRATION PROCESSES**

### **Introduction**

Beyond specific domains of integration there are also broader aspects of integration that cut across and beyond these domains. There are both spatial and temporal aspects to how, or indeed whether, refugees are able to integrate. Part of this is related to the asylum process(es). While the Scottish Government's philosophical view of integration is a more progressive one whereby asylum seekers and not just refugees need to be included in the process, for the individuals this is not always possible. While traversing the asylum process it is not always possible to simultaneously attempt to become integrated across multiple domains. This chapter begins by looking at the asylum process and how people feel it impacts on their integration before looking at the issues of how welcome people are made and the linked issue of experiences of discrimination. The other factors that cut across all of the processes in other chapters are tenure and sense of belonging, time, particularly time waiting, space and language. In addition, the role of children and young people in relation to integrating themselves as well as any impact on the integration of their parents is also of importance.

### **Asylum Process**

The experiences that people have in their early periods in a new environment can have fundamental and long term impacts on their ability to successfully rebuild their lives in their new country. The stresses and strains as well as the fundamental unfairness of the asylum system, a process that concerns most asylum seekers first institutional and relational experiences in Britain, has had a profound effect on the degree to which people can simply pick up and rebuild. For those in the asylum system for long periods of time the frustrations and impacts are obvious, but these effects are very often just exacerbated forms of those felt by most people in the asylum process no matter the timescale. Asylum seekers cannot access aspects of mainstream society and are restricted in so many ways as to have seriously inhibitive effects on their experience of freedom. These limitations then have knock on effects in many, if not all of the domains of integration addressed in chapters throughout this report. However, the asylum process also has its own internalised effects, from creating a psychology of expectation, and doing so effectively infantilising asylum seekers due to the restrictions on what people can do for themselves, to the psycho-social wellbeing effects resulting from spending long periods of time waiting, in transit or in cold storage. One asylum seeker likened the process to being incarcerated. "Being an asylum seeker is like you're being in jail" (E279).

There is also a major issue, with subsequent effects, of institutional assumptions made of applicants. The 'culture of disbelief' within the asylum system had been widely discussed<sup>38</sup> and the impact of going over traumatic experiences and events only to then be accused of lying, directly or indirectly, through questioning the credibility of statements made and looking for discrepancies in those stories, has a profound effect on the ability or even willingness of people to subsequently be open to new people and new experiences. There is also an assumption made by UK authorities that people from certain parts of the world tend to be functionally illiterate, particularly with regard to women, and so when confronted by intelligent asylum seekers with language skills, the fall back position is that they are being untruthful about their claim and/or their country of origin. These assumptions have a major impact on asylum seekers ongoing relationship with British institutions.

There are also broader assumptions made of applicants that imply untruthfulness. One of these is that asylum seekers from across the world are aware of entitlements prior to their arrival here. This was despite even Home Office research refuting the notion of the 'pull factors' of benefits and employment<sup>39</sup>. The bewilderment people often feel on arrival, a period in which they often feel they have 'made it' in the sense of having escaped from their country of origin, is confounded by the bombardment they subsequently feel with regards to information and the process where everything is new and much is surprising. Not knowing what will happen, what entitlements are, what the process is and what is expected of you can lead to confusion when trying to filter all of this data and is fundamentally at odds with the way successive UK Governments have framed asylum seekers as being knowledgeable about all of these things. However, even worse than being bombarded with information is not receiving enough information. There are those who spend a considerable period of time not applying for asylum due to their lack of knowledge of their right to do so. This is just one example of a fundamental disjuncture between rights that exist in treaties or on paper and the ability to actually use those rights. One woman in this research told a very sad and worrying story of two escapes, one from her country of origin and one from abuse suffered while in Britain. She did not know she was able to apply for asylum in Britain and so after being sexually abused, she fled and spent months sleeping rough with her newborn child. This period, she believes, has had long term and enduring consequences for her child's health. While homeless she considered suicide "because I just fed up with this, with the whole thing, you know" (E58-2). She eventually claimed asylum after being advised to go to a Citizens Advice Bureau by a policeman. Thus she knew nothing of the asylum system even after she had been in the country for a considerable period of time. For the process to

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<sup>38</sup> Souter Asylum decision-making in the UK: disbelief or denial? <http://www.opendemocracy.net/5050/james-souter/asylum-decision-making-in-uk-disbelief-or-denial>

<sup>39</sup> Robinson and Segrott 'Understanding the decision-making of asylum seekers', Home Office Research Study 243

operate on the assumption that people in other parts of the world, often with little or no access to information, are aware of the UK asylum system distorts the whole process irrefutably.

Another major issue raised with regard to the asylum process concerns the age at which people arrive and the knock on effect forced non work can have. People speak of 'coming of age' in the asylum process. One man who had spent many years in the asylum process and indicated that there was a significant 'hangover effect' of that process in that continuing problems mitigated against integration. "When I come this country I was turning 17 years....and spend all my life, you know, in here as turned into 28. I'm 28 now and it was 11 years ago, yeah...I was happy to get a good future here and I started living a new life in here but they don't let you" (E430). A large proportion of asylum seekers arrive here at an age where careers are normally beginning to be thought through and developed. The barriers to employment faced by asylum seekers *and* refugees means these formative years are often spent in enforced idleness, with long term effects on future employment chances and for well-being more generally.

However, what is also clear is that despite many and varied negative experiences resulting from the asylum process, many asylum seekers and refugees are extremely resourceful people. Many talk of the need and desire to do things for themselves and exhibit the very 'get up and go' attitude that successive UK Governments have eulogised with regard to the desire to encourage highly skilled and entrepreneurial migration. Many manage to balance learning English, traversing the asylum process, attending a wide range of training and courses, volunteering and informally supporting other asylum seekers, while often also having their own caring responsibilities. One respondent talked of his view of the future in relation to the past experiences of the asylum process. "I think, to be honest, I'm ready to face whatever challenges are ahead of me now at the moment, for the fact that I've been granted leave to remain in this country. I don't really care much about the stumbling blocks that are in front of me.....once we have got your status, you can't compare it to what we have been going through, because that one is destroying us.....it depresses you, it just demolishes you, it finishes you" (E532 2). However, what is clear is that in many cases the difficulties people face do not 'finish' them and asylum seekers and refugees somehow manage to keep going and exhibit an unquenchable thirst to achieve all they can of their lives here.

They also, contrary to successive Governments pronouncements about segregation and community cohesion show a huge propensity to straddle co-ethnic and host community contact and connection. However, these successes are despite rather than because of the



asylum process and its effects. One interviewee effectively argued that within the present system integration while going through that process was not possible. "To be honest it's impossible to integrate with people. Integration - if you have a definition of integration, it means it will be somewhere in the society and have some attempt like working, doing some activities, because the environment which I am living in at the moment, it makes me separate from other people because I'm not allowed to work in this society at the moment. I'm not able to get even a volunteer job, I'm not able to get any benefits" (E681). In some cases the effect is that asylum seekers live isolated and atomised lives. However, for most people involved in this research there was a profound desire to both develop bonds with either co-ethnic or with the general asylum seeking populations *and* to make links with the local population. Most see having 'Scottish' friends almost as a privilege and they will do whatever they can to reach that goal. In many cases this can occur from existing structures such as voluntary and/or religious groups, but there is also a need for continued support for inter-community contact in localities where people live. Having friendly relations with neighbours, indeed being able to describe neighbours as friends, was in many cases considered the end point of local integration.

Refugee status was seen as part of the solution to the enforced segregation of the asylum process. "At the present moment, I think just once getting papers, the only thing that you think of probably is just to maybe work for a while, because at the same time I've been fed by the state, so I want to pay back as well. Yeah, just to work for myself and then pay my taxes, just like all the other people" (E684). Refugee status was thus a means of achieving normality. Far from notions of asylum seekers presented by the media and many politicians, the desire to be just like everyone else is prevalent among asylum seeking groups and presents a far less frightening image of their wants and desires.

### **Do Refugees Feel Welcome?**

Whether refugees feel that they can integrate into a neighbourhood, city or country is clearly affected by the degree to which they do or do not feel welcomed within any particular spatial unit. In addressing this the research did not press any particular perspective but interestingly one clear issue that arose concerned the difference with regard to variations between the welcome experienced from the 'nation state' and that experienced by the population. State institutions are generally associated with the nation state, mostly Britain, and the lack of welcome emanating from them meant that the state and its institutions were seen as almost uniformly unwelcoming. This was contrasted with the general populace, or at least the population that respondents had experienced on a regular basis, as well as more localised institutions. One said simply "I know people in Scotland are very good, apart from the Home Office" (E681). Another was even more direct in stating that there is a difference

between the way the Home Office and the way the people treat you. “For the British society it’s okay they say welcome to Britain, and for the Home Office..... is not welcome in Britain” (E606).

Most research participants therefore felt that in general the population in Scotland, Edinburgh/Glasgow *and* in local communities where they lived had made them feel welcome. There are, of course, many examples against this general position and these are highlighted in the section on discrimination. Nevertheless, there were numerous ways that people were made to feel welcome that ranged from basic smiles and greetings in the street to examples of neighbours coming to peoples doors to check on them and/or help them with provisions, from basic supplies to larger electrical appliances. There was a temporal dimension to this in many cases as the time it takes to develop these reciprocal relationships are important as was the very fact of help being reciprocal. There was also much made of the organisations outside of Government institutions and the help and support that they provided. These are seen as providing a range of functions from basic information and support to enabling social connections. Access to certain services was also highlighted as an important element of the welcome received and was linked to waiting to be seen as normal, but paradoxically also reflected the real gratitude felt by refugees, paradoxical in the sense that feeling grateful for any help or support distinguishes people from others who are more comfortable with the view that such support is natural or normal.

State institutions, in particular UKBA and to a lesser extent the DWP combine with politicians to militate against these positive local developments in the views of refugees. There was some sense that institutional behaviour can act to nullify many of these positive integrative behaviours at the more localised levels. This is important as it demonstrates that Government behaviours and attitudes have enduring impacts, even upon populations that the same Government would like to see integrated. Thus the lack of welcome for asylum seekers, not a population that the UK Government seeks to integrate continues to affect the views of refugees, a population the UK Government *does* say that it wants to integrate.

The view of a welcome being slightly mediated by the media was also expressed throughout this research. It was not so much that the public openly reflected media characterisations of asylum seekers and refugees, but more that asylum seekers and refugees are aware of the media debate and *suspect* that the public will believe the stories being told by media outlets. “It was not easy to be welcomed by Britain, because you see all the time the matter for asylum seekers and refugees. All negative things they were saying to asylum seekers..... On the News, you see around Britain, not only here around Britain. You see when some time the people were doing bad things in London for bombing, you see all bad things they

were saying it's because asylum seekers are here. But we are totally different" (E752). One respondent commented that "When you are here, you're not able to communicate with other people because first, you know, they have a different imagination in their mind when they see you. They have a bad picture in their mind of asylum seeker..... they think an asylum seeker is a bad person, maybe. Actually, I don't have any definition of that, to tell you or I'm not able to write a good word for what is in their minds, but they have a bad reflection in their mind when I say I'm an asylum seeker or a refugee" (E681). With regard to why people think these attitudes prevail one interviewee strongly argued that the way the media portray asylum seekers had a real impact. "Yeah but they don't know, they think it's like tarring everybody in the same brush.....Just like if I say oh if it's one people swear at me in the street I say oh they are Scottish people are like this.....You cannot say like this, maybe that's happened one person, two person, three person, is everybody no the same, it's all different" (E430).

The degree to which people were aware of media portrayals was surprising, even among those whose language skills generally did not allow them to read and listen to mainstream media. However, the view expressed by many was that they have to go either out of their way to *prove* that they are different to that common portrayal, or else they go into their shell and avoid general contact. Thankfully the former seems more common than the latter. Nevertheless an awareness of group vilification, even if not having direct impacts, added to a general feeling of unease among many respondents.

Experiences of unwelcoming behaviour were often not highlighted initially in this research project as respondents do not appear to want to be seen as complaining and generally feel that incidents should not be used in a way that overrides a generally warm welcome. Indeed the very fact of not complaining says something itself about acculturation or lack thereof. There was an interesting view expressed by a number of interviewees that despite any negative experiences, they did not have a 'right' to complain. This was due to this not being 'their' country yet. "I can't say anything to them because it's their country of course and they are right, they don't like maybe foreign people, some of them, some of them and it's their right" (E529). Another added that "we've managed to be helped with a house and managed to be helped with money for food. So, I can say, it's...we've been helped really. You can't ask for more or complain. Even though it's not enough but, yeah, in some places you don't get what we are getting" (E750). Others explained negative experience with reference to the lack of education and ignorance of perpetrators. "That if the people are civilised and educated, they will respect you, they will not discriminate you, and those who want to do such minor events or, like shutting the door in front of you, they are coming from, because of their low social class, or they are not educated, something like that. I take it from this point.

So it's not quite important for me" (E535). Others swept those experiences away with versions of the view that kids do that sort of thing. One said "It's annoying but still, they're children. I thought maybe, with the time, because they see you're different and new to the area. It's not only me actually, I have a neighbour who's Scottish, and he's a very old man and they annoy him as well. Yeah. So it's not that they're targeting me" (E536).

Nevertheless, a number of interviewees talked of having been warmly welcomed and never having experienced anything negative, only to later highlight incidents, some violent, that they had experienced in their local communities. Some were clear that these had been racist or anti-refugee incidents, although many more appeared to feel that such incidents are to be expected by all people who live in certain communities. Indeed a couple of respondents joked that being on the receiving end of general abuse was almost a sign of being treated the same as others in those communities and was therefore a sign of local integration.

One respondent differentiated a couple of unwelcoming incidents from an overall warm welcome but also highlighted that the negative experiences had enduring effects, they do not override all of the positive experiences (E536). Another felt that while there were no major problems much work remained to be done to overcome remaining discriminatory attitudes and behaviour. "People have been really friendly.....And those who were bad people, meaning racist people, have been told about the situation, about who we are, and I don't blame them, they'd never seen people like us, but the more they learn about us the more.....When I just arrived I felt racism in most every way, but now I don't even hear about it" (E279). Another added "I wouldn't say it's different or it's not welcoming, I would say it might be, but it needs more time for someone to understand" (E144). Thus racist incidents do exist, but must also be placed within the context of broader discriminatory practices by state institutions and the media.

## **Discrimination**

As highlighted above and in the previous chapter, most asylum seekers first contacts with people and institutions, and those which have the most profound affects, are with the asylum process and the people and institutions involved. However, what is also of huge importance is the way that people arriving and living here are treated by others. The overall figures for whether people feel they been discriminated against in Survey 1 are in the table below, and indicate a very a large proportion of our respondents feel that they have been subject to some discrimination.

**Table 36 – experience of discrimination – Survey 1**

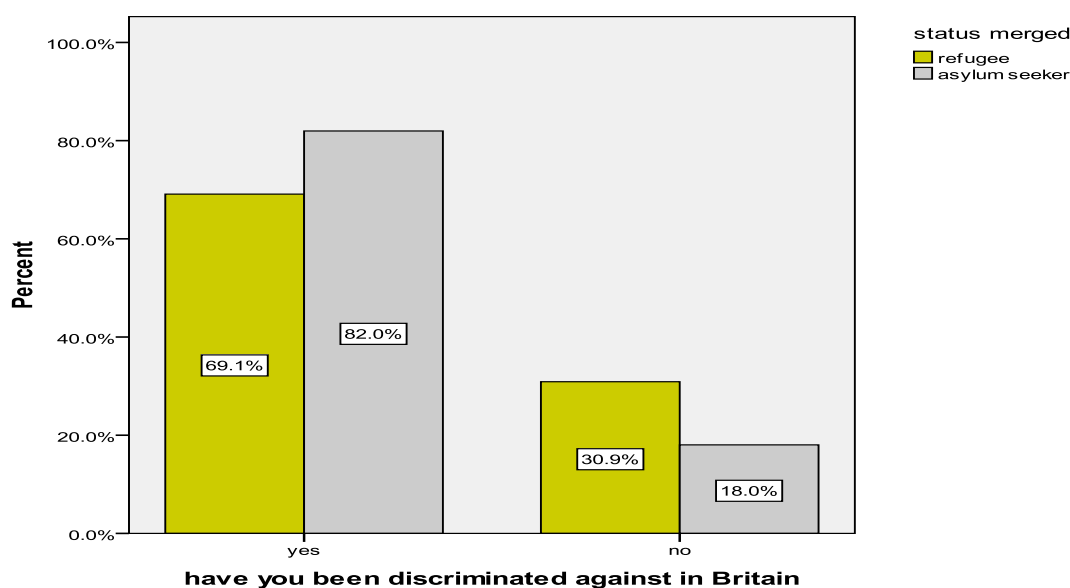
Have you been discriminated against in Britain?	Percent
yes	71.6
no	28.4
Total	100.0

It is interesting to note that respondents feel relatively satisfied and safe in their neighbourhoods and yet there is a widespread feeling of having been discriminated against. This might suggest that the discrimination is not being primarily experienced within communities. Indeed, the table below shows that about half of the respondents who feel they have been discriminated against are also satisfied with their neighbourhoods.

**Table 37 – Discrimination and satisfaction with neighbourhood – Survey 1**

Neighbourhood satisfaction/ been discriminated against in Britain				
		been discriminated against in Britain?		Total
		yes	no	
satisfaction with neighbourhood?	satisfied	74	41	115
	not sure	28	13	41
	not satisfied	39	5	44
Total		141	59	200

This might suggest that respondents view state institutions as one of the main perpetrators of discrimination rather than it being about street racism. This view is also supported by the following table which shows that significantly more asylum seekers than refugees feeling that they had been subject to discrimination and thus discrimination may be related more to experiences in the asylum process. Some 51.7% of asylum seekers against 26.9% of refugees reported discrimination on the basis of being an asylum seekers or refugee, again perhaps suggesting institutional discrimination.



**Figure 28 – Experience of discrimination by status – Survey 1**

This is not to suggest in any way that refugees and asylum seekers are not subjected to face to face racism, as will be shown below. Nevertheless, there is a feeling that the very fact of being an asylum seeker makes you a victim of discrimination, in some cases related to the media, as mentioned earlier. For those who feel that they have been discriminated against there were a variety of answers given with regard to the basis of that discrimination, with the largest being that the victim is an asylum seeker or refugee, followed by colour or race and nationality and language. These were multiple option questions and so respondents could tick as many boxes as they felt appropriate.

**Table 38 – Reasons for discrimination**

<b>Basis of discrimination</b>	<b>Number saying yes</b>
<b>Nationality</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>Religion</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Colour or race</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>Gender</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Disability</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Language</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>Ethnic group</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Age</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Sexuality</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Being asylum seeker/refugee</b>	<b>67</b>
<b>Other</b>	<b>11</b>

In follow-up interviews it became clear that discrimination on the basis of race, colour and nationality was often also seen in relation to the asylum process. People compare themselves, for example as black African asylum seekers, to white Scottish people or even white migrants on a variety of other migration schemes<sup>40</sup> and consider discrimination to be partly about the asylum process and partly about the less favourable way people from certain parts of the world are treated by broader migration policy.

On experiencing discrimination few said they reported it to the police and those who did were not satisfied with the responses. Many respondents said that the view that they shouldn't report incidents to the police was a commonly held one and was passed to people quite soon on arrival from other refugee communities. An example of this view is that "That's the tendency of people from my background, from my culture. When you come here, they come to see you, they welcome you and they do tell you, "People here, swear at you, especially at black people, but don't go to the police". And whatever you have, whatever thoughts you have, as soon as you arrive, these are the first things that you're told. So for people who are attacked, this is the advice that they've been given. Don't, you'll be sworn

<sup>40</sup> There have been a large number of migration schemes in the UK over the past 10 years, from the Workers Registration Scheme for nationals of new EU member states, the so called A8; to Highly Skilled Migrants schemes and Seasonal Agricultural Workers Schemes; to Working Holidaymakers schemes.

at, but don't go to the police" (E137). This official reporting of discrimination is likely to be lower than the lived reality.

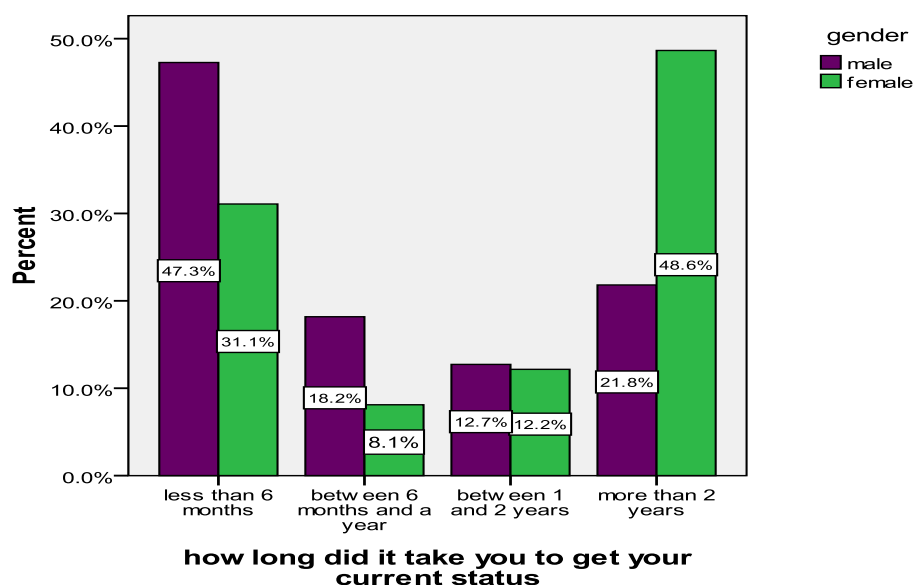
## Time

One important dimension of integration that is apparent throughout all aspects of both the asylum process as well as for those with refugee status concerned the linked issues of waiting and of time more generally. Respondents often allude to time in both positive and negative ways with the important issue of waiting on the negative side. This is not surprisingly most profound as people go through the process but is also evident post status, sometimes due to hangover effects of this process and sometimes concerning specific aspects of refugeeness.

**Table 39 – Time to get refugees status – Survey 1**

	How long did it take you to get your current status?	Percent
	less than 6 months	36.2
	between 6 months and a year	12.1
	between 1 and 2 years	12.8
	more than 2 years	39.0
	Total	100.0

Nevertheless, time spent in the process with the problems associated with that process remain stubbornly difficult to improve. The table below includes only those with refugee status and we see just over half of our respondents with refugee status waited for a year or more before getting that status. However, there is a significant gender dimension in that women appear to wait much longer than men.



**Figure 29 – Time to status by gender – Survey 1**

One might postulate that part of the reason for this concerns disclosure. That is, women with children are less likely to disclose all of the reasons for their claim at the initial decision-making stage, especially as child care at asylum interviews still appears to be somewhat haphazard and that many of these respondents went through the process prior to the existence of any childcare. Indeed, on closer analysis we see that 55% of women with children waited for more than two years to get status compared to just 42% of women without children. Time waiting is therefore a major issue for all but is most stark for mothers and their children.

For most asylum seekers thoughts of the future were entirely about getting leave to remain. Until then the future was something of an imponderable and can therefore not be fully comprehended. "It's on hold....you can't do anything to be honest" (E750). "At the moment I don't have any plan" (E681), "If I have my status I believe everything is going to work out fine, because for me, having my status is giving me another hope, you know, another chance to live .....I will be able to take care of my baby. I really want to be a good mother but I believe if I have my status, definitely everything is going to be fine" (E58). Planning beyond the process is therefore not really possible at present beyond training and language development. Psychologically people cannot really perceive life beyond the process other than that they believe things will significantly improve. However, the waiting involved creates a feeling of lives being frozen.

While the process itself at best delays integration and at worse removes the possibility of integration, there are also other temporal factors at play. There was a view that establishing who you are in this country, as opposed to your country of origin, can take time but is a necessary component of integration. "Just give me a chance to prove I'm a good person. So it's difficult to find this kind of opportunity in this country..... in my country I don't need that. Everyone knows (her name) and what kind of experience she has. But in this country because I've got my history there, here I need to build another history and add something to myself" (E33). This temporal issue straddles time to establish who you are and the loss of status. Both require attention in order to develop a sense of belonging and along with a sense of belonging comes psychological integration. This was another element of the desire for normality. To be like other people in your country can take time and this was linked to the process of establishing who you are.

There are also temporal issues in almost all other aspects of peoples' lives post status. In housing new and more established refugees alike often wait long periods of time in order to access appropriate housing, leaving many in temporary accommodation for considerable



lengths of time. The chapter on housing outlines these concerns but should be placed alongside the other temporal issues highlighted in this section. Time waiting for housing must be placed alongside time spent in other ways to try to re-establish lives and is therefore not as simple as to say waiting for appropriate housing for refugees is the same as for other groups who do not have to experience these other temporal issues. For example, many refugees spend considerable time and energy going through the family reunion process and if successful often then spend long periods of time waiting for family units to return to 'normality', often a wait in vain. Many spend considerable time trying to both access and then finish educational courses and/or trying to get existing qualification recognised. Time is also spent trying to extend friendship groups and to build more profound relationships with neighbours and friends. This is linked to the time taken to be 'accepted'. Added to this is the time spent trying to access the labour market and the inability to do so which can have profound effects. Thus any temporal issues for asylum seekers and refugees is an exacerbated issue when compared to other disadvantaged groups, low employment levels being one of the most concerning for refugees themselves. This issue of the search for employment was seen as having social as well as financial integrative functions. "We have to understand that it's not an easy process and that we have to confront these difficulties in order to integrate. Because if we stay locked away, if we close in on ourselves, we won't be part of normal life..... But the biggest problem for people coming to this country is finding a job. And it does seem as if there's a barrier in the job field" (E137).

However another major issue regarding time concerned that of the limited leave to remain now available to refugees. Once successfully navigating the asylum process, alongside the other temporal issues mentioned above, is the issue of status, time and integration. While other research points to the issue of 5-years' status elongating the problems experienced during the asylum process<sup>41</sup>, there is a view in evidence in this research that having temporary status inhibits your ability to fully contribute to society. Thus 5-years are spent waiting and wondering what will happen next. This is only partly about concerns over being returned as it also involves the effect it has in terms of employment access and the psychological effects of still feeling in a liminal position, not subject to return but not accepted enough to fully begin rebuilding lives. What is more, the imposition of 5-year status is a bureaucratic process that achieves nothing. Most refugees get their status extended and so all this current process does is to create an expensive and bureaucratic process for an overstretched Government department, but more importantly it also inhibits integration by delaying the security required in order to reach that point.

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<sup>41</sup> Stewart and Mulvey, Becoming British citizens? Experiences and opinions of refugees living in Scotland [http://www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk/policy\\_and\\_research/research\\_reports](http://www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk/policy_and_research/research_reports)

Time also plays a part in terms of if and when refugees start to feel as if they are integrated. A huge variety of views were expressed regarding the process of integration and how it occurs. In terms of when integration can happen there were a number of views expressed that relate to both stages of the process and to the linked issues of rights and belonging. One respondent made the point that citizenship can act as an aid to integration, “It makes life easier....when you seen an asylum, then get your residence. And then eventually, to be integrated in the society and become one of...part of the country” (E536). In this case integration was seen as only coming with citizenship rights. Until then refugees can only hope to partially integrate. Therefore, in many cases the desire to be the same as your friends, colleagues, neighbours etc in terms of rights leads to belonging, and is also linked to temporary refugee status. Only permanence creates the psychological ability to feel safe, to rebuild your life and to be normal.

### Language

Another key issue evident across all aspects of integration is that of language. Not only does the ability to speak English have a profound effect on whether people can orientate themselves around the city, ask for help and make friends, there are also other impacts. Language is important in terms of how or even whether people develop a sense of belonging to place and so link temporal and spatial issues. Language issues interact with place, space, time and belonging. For example, E34 2 was fully aware that his struggles with language were having a negative impact on his ability to feel part of Scottish society. Despite being an academic he talked of English allowing him to “understand society, to read the newspaper well, to understand well, listen ..... a Scottish accent especially”. General communication was therefore seen as something of an incubator for a sense of belonging.

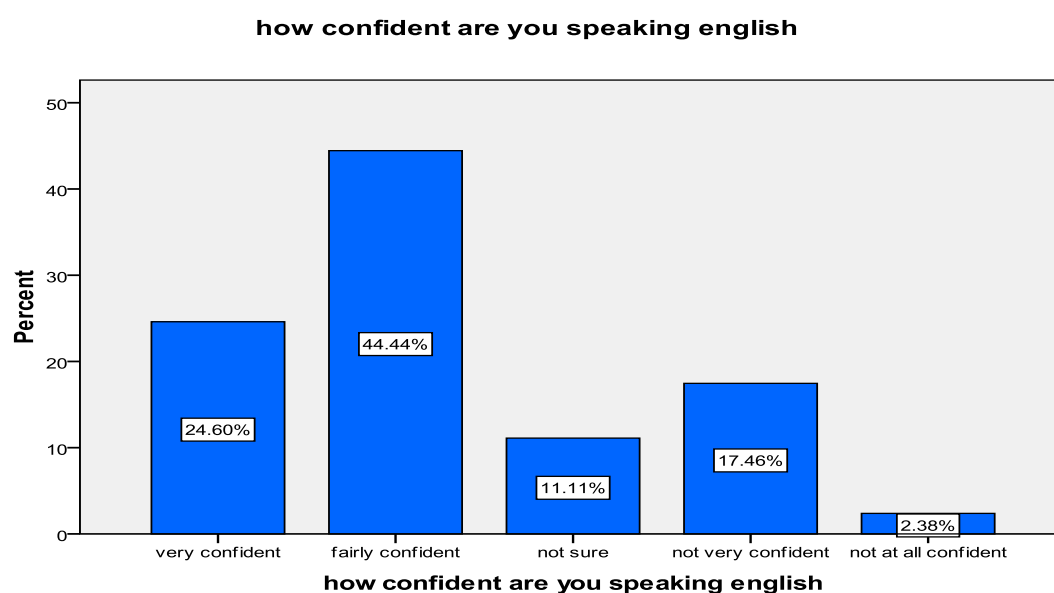
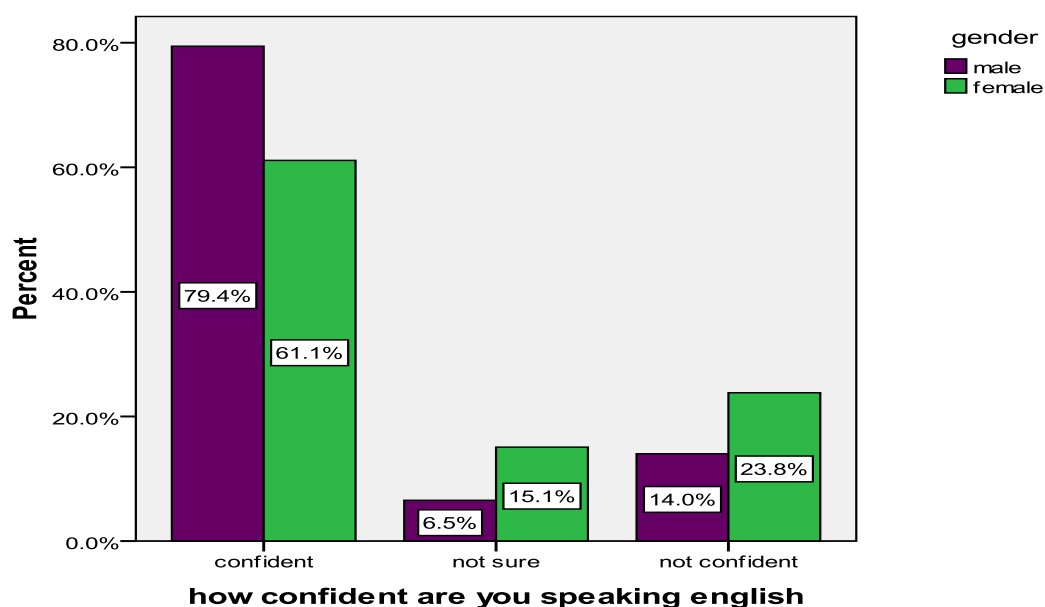


Figure 30 – Confidence speaking English – Survey 1

Interestingly there was a view expressed by many in this research that women’s language skills were less developed, yet conversely that women were more successful in terms of local integration. E432 explained it thus. “They can integrate much faster....so she has friends within the neighbourhood...they like to chat, they like to be friendly more than us....maybe we’re a wee bit more choosy than them, so we like to pick our friends”. The figures for language confidence supports this to some degree. The regularity of contact with friends is slightly related to confidence in English for men, but much less so for women. That is, women with lower confidence speaking English were more likely than men with similar confidence levels to speak regularly to friends and neighbours. Therefore this assertion made by many of our male respondents does have a degree of statistical support. That said it is unclear if the contact women have is with people they speak English with or not.



**Figure 31 – English confidence by gender – Survey 1**

There is no neat linear process in relation to language acquisition or at least confidence in speaking English. The assumption often made at the beginning of the process is that as time goes on language skills and confidence will inevitably improve. However, when crossing year of arrival with English language confidence we see a varied picture. Confidence levels go up and down across years, with the highest level of confidence among those arriving in 2001, some 92.3% of whom describe themselves as being confident speaking English, and the lowest in 2006 at just 47.4%. There is no relationship between the two variables according to a Pearson correlation measurement.

Looking at those same respondents two-years on from them answering the initial question this view is borne out. Not one respondent felt that their English language skills had

improved in the preceding two years, although it should be stated that this was from high initial levels of language confidence. One potential reason for this, and one highlighted in the Survey of New Refugees is that people often initially over-estimate their English levels. Only through time do they become more aware of what they do not know.

Nevertheless language is seen as one of the major issues in creating barriers or avenues for integration. Not only is general day-to-day life positively impacted by English language development, the two primary issues mentioned by respondents in this study were employment and social connections. While employment is mentioned repeatedly and seems so obviously linked to language as to require no further comment, in terms of the small numbers in our sample who had successfully found employment, there is no direct link between English language confidence and employment. Thus in many cases despite very good language skills, jobs remain elusive. That said, employment, where it was successfully accessed, was seen itself as having hugely positive impacts on language development, particularly regarding the issue of learning accents.

Social connections are more clearly impacted by language development and can also lead to employment opportunities. While some respondents argued that they were unable to live as humans without language skills (E541), for most the feelings were less dramatic but no less important. Language development was seen as having a significant impact on the ability to meet friends both locally and to take part in other activities throughout the city. Language was seen as mediating both social connections and mental health. There appears to be something of a symbiotic relationship between language development and improvements in mental health, with obvious and profound effects on broader integration.

Language is therefore seen as being a key factor in allowing people to feel part of the community. One respondent stated that “that barrier language makes things more difficult, you know, because most of the people, they don't understand why you don't understand language. It's like okay, this is a country speaking English” (E144). For this man, language development meant he had managed to make local contacts through socialising in the pub and this had knock on effects. “You know, when I go into a pub, I've a good reason why I'm going to the pub, it's about socialising, having my cup, my drink or anything, or have a talk...a chat with somebody. Nobody will be thinking why is he coming, what is he doing here, it's a social thing, everybody is welcome. But mostly, going in there, thinking what am I going to say to those people. It's about knowing what's happening in that pub, knowing what's happening in that community...in the community hall, knowing what's happening in the library, knowing what's happening in school grounds, you know what I mean, it's about all those things, getting involved with them”.

Given the clear and enduring importance of language and the hangover effects caused by time-lags in its development, it is something of a concern that there are so many problems in accessing language classes. Waits of 2-years are not uncommon and make the chance of coming out of 'cold storage' in an employment sense much more difficult going into the future. Language is seen as effecting employment prospects as well as educational access and progression, effects friendships and community connections and effects a general sense of belonging. If proficiency is put off for a number of years the hangover effects in terms of careers, health, well-being and community cohesion can be profound. Thus the UK Government decision to end support for language classes for new refugees is likely to have profoundly negative impacts on refugee integration in England<sup>42</sup> while cuts in ESOL in Scotland would also negatively affect asylum seekers and refugees here.

### **Children**

There are a number of multi-faceted issues around children that are also deserving of attention and cut across numerous domains. Prior to detailing some of these points, however, it is worth re-iterating that nobody under the age of 18 was involved in this research project and therefore what follows comes from a combination of existing research and the views of parents who were involved in the research.

The first issue to arise is the view that children integrate better than their parents. There appear to be two primary reasons for this. First, the very fact of attending schools forces mixing with children from other backgrounds. Schools are widely viewed, with some justification, as a key venue for integration. What is more, the lack of pressure in a school setting when compared to adult education and the psychological need adults have to do well allows a more organic as well as less pressurised socialisation process for children. "It's easy for children to integrate because most of the time they are always out, going to schools and all that, and especially for my 14 year old, we came here when he was only nine. He is well known.....He plays very well with other community friends. He doesn't have someone from maybe the colour of his skin, or his friends do they even consider that he is different from them. I see them sometimes playing, I even wonder. But I think it gets a bit difficult if someone comes here when they are a bit older" (E14).

The other reason children appear to integrate 'better', and one that can have a negative impact on their relationships to their parents concerns their identity. Parents often attempt to bring their children up in a similar way to how they would have done so in their country of origin, or at least try to ensure that there is significant cultural knowledge in their children

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<sup>42</sup> Refugee Council Briefing English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) January 2011

regarding their parents backgrounds. However, children often appear to develop a dual identity quickly and the Glaswegian, Scottish or British part of that identity is often somewhat alien to their parents and is therefore difficult for parents to deal with or comprehend. Children were viewed by E432-2 as having been considerably more successful in getting to know others in more than a superficial way. They were invited to lots of birthday parties and often went to play with other children in a small local playground. After living here for just two years he felt that both of his children were now Glaswegian. One man spoke of his pleasure that his daughter had friends at school wanted to place restrictions on the closeness of those relationships. While she is invited to spend the night at friends' houses and to go to the cinema, he is worried about losing control and the result this could have on his daughters later life options (E536). A form of acculturation occurs, however, where children do not compare their lives with those of children in their country of origin, or in some cases their parents country of origin, but compare themselves and their lives to that of fellow school pupils. Thus parents are seen as acting to significantly restrict their legitimate freedom and this can cause power struggles within family units<sup>43</sup>.

With regard to general integration E33-2 was clear that her children have integrated 'better' than her or her husband. "They have no problem at all. They have lots of friends, Scottish and from different nationalities as well of course, lots of friends". It was easier for children as "we've got our history, our knowledge, our values, but for them, prior to do it here. So for them, no problem at all". Her children making friends, however, had had a positive impact on her in the sense that one of the three people that she considered friends, although still not profound friends in the way that she would wish, she met through the mother of a friend of her sons.

That said, however, parents were often willing to allow more leeway in response to their children's demands than they thought they would have done. That is, the desire that parents have for their children to be integrated leads them to develop different forms of parenting. Indeed, more than that, parents in many cases give up to some degree on their own cultures, needs and behaviours to accommodate those of their children, be that where they live or in terms relational issues. Parents hint at developing more liberal parenting styles than they thought they would. Both parents in one interview talked together about their attempts to balance cultures for their son (E34-2). They sent him to Arabic classes and tried to make sure he knew about the culture of his parents (they were explicit in talking about their culture rather than their son's culture). However, within this they were keen that he

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<sup>43</sup> A Masters research project supported by Scottish Refugee Council and conducted by Caireen Warren highlighted differences between parents and their children in a range of areas. Its title was ' An exploration of the dynamics between social connection and social and emotional literacy of parents and their children who are refugees in Scotland'

adopt any part of Scottish culture that he sees fit. "We advise him and then when he becomes older, he chooses what life. Even religion, we are open minded".

There were a number of issues that emerged with regard to parents' relationships with their children. One issue that emerged in a number of interviews was the desire among parents to provide a positive example for the children, which was often being stifled by barriers. "With their future, like I said, we...at the moment, we are not showing any example, but the thing is we have to talk to him and tell him about how good education is, how you would be helped with education, how serious you should be taking the education" (E750). He went on that "you want to be like an example for your own children. Sometimes it's really hard for them because when we were back home, we were working for them and now here, we just sit around with them. They really don't know what's happening and we are just like nothing" (E750). However, the other side of this was apprehension on the part of parents that their enforced idleness was proving to be a bad example to their children. One highly skilled woman, when asked if her children wanted to follow the same path as her in terms of careers. Her reply was "No they don't have any interest in medicine. Especially my eldest son because he always said, 'Look what you have got, you and my dad, from medicine. You are in your forties and fifties and still reading and doing exams!'.....Yes, but I always, always tell him, that his situation is totally different from ours, because we are obliged to start from the zero level, from the scratch, many times. Not only here in the UK, but we've been to some other countries, and also, we have to start from the beginning always. It's quite hampering" (E535). She effectively felt that her and her husband were sacrificing their careers in order to ensure their children grow up in a safe and secure environment. Some participants made reference to their children such that the better prospects that their children have living in Scotland made many of their difficulties worth putting up with. "If I look at the situation of my country, because (Country of Origin) is in a bad situation now, it's not suitable for children to live....so I feel quite pleased with the peaceful situation here, because it's a good place for my children to have a good future. So, if I feel lonely, I say I'm in a better situation than many other Iraqis in my country.....I have to cope with the situation here, even if it is not the same like when I was in my country because it's a peaceful country...an opportunity for my children to have a good future. So, it's not a problem for me if I don't have a car, or if I don't wear or buy expensive clothes, it's not a problem"(E535).

Children can therefore lead decision-making, can integrate more quickly and can help parents to integrate. However, there are also real power issues within families that those parents and children attempt to address at the same time as the myriad of other issues that they are dealing with, both collectively and individually.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has looked broadly at some of the processes involved in the overall integration process. The first thing that strongly emerged was that there are long-term impacts of the asylum process. Almost all other integration domains, as well as facilitators, are affected by the asylum process, and practically all are negatively affected. Another important aspect of integration in all of its guises is how welcome, or not, people are made to feel here. This links to both initial welcome as well as issues around discrimination. Another issue that crosses all other aspects of integration is that of time. Not only do asylum seekers and refugees spend considerable amounts of time waiting; waiting for status (particularly for women), waiting to find work, waiting to get on educational courses, waiting to make friends, waiting for 5-year refugee status to come to an end, all respondents were clear that integration itself takes time. Language is another multi-dimensional factor in integration. There was not a single aspect of integration that remained immune to the effects of language and language development. The final part of the chapter has shown some of the issues regarding the integration of children. The research confirms views that children often integrate 'better' than their parents but it also suggests that children, due to less history elsewhere, are quicker in taking on a new identity, and with it the important sense of belonging.



## CHAPTER 9 - WHAT DO PEOPLE INTEGRATE INTO

### Introduction

Beyond processes of integration it is also important to pose questions, with some suggested answers, about what people are being asked to integrate into. While the UK Governments broad conception is that people should integrate into Britain or some notion of British values<sup>44</sup>, there is also some recognition at both the UK and Scottish levels of Government that people tend to look more to the level of neighbourhood or community, however defined. In addition, integration into a large nation state and/or into an ill-defined national identity are obviously problematic. However, there are also other factors that impact on such questions. This chapter brings together some socio-economic and spatial factors regarding what people integrate into. The chapter then touches on the issue of what spaces refugees integrate into, that is, neighbourhoods, cities or countries. It then goes on to touch on questions of socio-economics and asks whether policy goals are for asylum seekers and refugees to integrate into poverty. The chapter ends by highlighting what respondents felt was the best thing about living 'here' as well as what is the worst, before highlighting how people responded when asked what they would like to say to the public and/or politicians here.

### Space

In terms of where integration happens there was a strongly held view that it happens in communities or other small spatial units. "How you mix with people, how do you associate with people, do you enjoy socialising with people ..... I enjoy having a relationship with native people because, you know, I need to know what kind of people I'm living with, and I need to know if, in the future, if I want to do some business or so, if I want to, I want to know what's the taste of the society, that helps me to get a good idea, accurate idea, to adjust myself with things like that..... I like people in here, they've always been kind to me and if I ever need anything they, well, ready, they were ready to help me voluntarily and they really helped me a lot when I was moving home, when I was trying...struggling to do something, they offered me help and they always help me if I needed..." (E541). This narrative showed both existing local integration and friendships, but also looked to the future at potential developments. However, the whole interview was focussed on locality. Integration into a country or even city was viewed as being too overwhelming to comprehend, but integration into the area you live in was not only seen as possible, but was also more organic. For most participants integration was possible but only really within defined and small spatial units. It is only here that the institutional and practical barriers to integration can be overcome.

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<sup>44</sup> Eric Pickles speech on integration <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/uniting-our-communities-integration-in-2013>

Space therefore plays a major role in allowing for community interaction, should that type of space be available, and also for the encouragement of bonds within the asylum seeking and refugees communities. Reference was consistently made in this research project about the need for space where people can either come together to fix local problems or simply meet for social purposes, and importantly to laugh. Discussion about the weather, for example, tended to suggest that community interaction is more widespread on warm and sunny days as people tend to be out in the street more. Therefore spaces for that sort of contact on non sunny days were suggested as crucial. In the parts of Glasgow where there were active integration networks and that therefore had some space, although somewhat limited, there tended to be a stronger inter-community interaction than in those areas that lacked such organisations. For them contact with 'Scottish people' came through other means such as voluntary work and college, but was often absent from the community in which they live.

The weather was seen as having quite a profound impact on neighbourhood contact in many cases. One talked of the increased social interaction during periods of good weather. "Because in the summer people are outside and gardening and its sunny and they're having a drink at the weekend and stuff" (E606). Another interviewee agreed saying, "like yesterday we have a nice weather I have been outside and the same neighbours from the same building.....they have been outside as well because nice weather they start chat" (A75). "If the weather is very bad, the chance of meeting those people is zero" (E144). In some cases the importance of children to integration interacts with the weather to promote contact. "When the weather is good, the sunshine etc, maybe you can see children playing in the street, the mum standing.....but when the weather is bad you don't see them. Everybody inside the house" (E38). The corollary to these periods of interaction was the long winter months when "everyone would be rushing into the house to be warm" (E750). At these times there is less social contact and less of a feeling of belonging to those communities.

### **Spatial Integration**

The spatial units into which people integrate as well as any sense of belonging to those spatial units are of huge importance to the individuals involved but also in relation to where integration support is directed. As mentioned in the previous chapter, in general asylum seekers and refugees express the view that they do not integrate into the 'imagined community' of a nation state<sup>45</sup>, but into a smaller spatial unit. However, just what these units are is not uniform. Many respondents talk of the differences between Scotland and England, with Scotland seen as being more welcoming. It is worth pointing out, however, that many of those expressing this view had only limited direct experience of England. Nevertheless, this

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<sup>45</sup> Benedict Anderson famously described nation states as imagined communities, imagined due to the fact that individuals imagine themselves as part of a group, most of whose members they will never meet

confounded the expectations many respondents had had, whereby they had been warned that Scotland was not a welcoming place for refugees.

A number of our interviewees felt that they had gradually managed to re-build their lives here and the prospect of moving and starting all over again was not an enticing one. For one respondent it also had to do with what he had heard about other parts of the UK. "I feel good here.....And I start college here, I know a little city now, people, their culture, so I think if I want to move to another city it's another start again and I think here is everything is good. And I've heard they are the best people, more kind.....the kindest people in the UK, I've heard this" (E529). In these cases the unit into which people feel that they can integrate was the city. There were a number of reasons people raised the city as the prime spatial unit. One clear one is that it is a manageable size. Both physically and psychologically integration into something bigger was often viewed as daunting.

One aspect of city or Scottish integration that is a reasonable proxy for sense of belonging concerns plans to leave or stay. Minus the long term and familial links in an area it might be assumed that there is little to stop people moving away as the emotional ties are not there. There are some respondents who indicate that they simply do not wish to start again in a new area, regardless of how they feel about their existing area. However, the vast majority of research participants did not plan to leave the city that they live in and the few who did would do so primarily for employment purposes. This is in contrast to the large number who wanted to move home, some to different houses in the same area and some to new areas within the same city. This suggests some degree of attachment to particular areas or neighbourhoods, but also some attachment to the city itself.

The sense of gratitude many respondents had to Glasgow and to Scotland also encouraged their plans to stay here. "I can't move to any place in Britain because I am grateful to the Scottish society and I feel myself it would be better if I stay in Glasgow and even my education as well, I can't move back to England" (E606). This was linked for some respondents to a desire to contribute to the place that had helped them. "We will do something useful for this country. We are not rubbish people. We are skilled people, educated people. We've got knowledge, experience, qualifications. I think they will agree" (E33).

Others wanted to stay for the seemingly more simple and straightforward reason that they like living here. A couple of those comments were that "I love Scotland because I've been here, I've been integrated here and the hospitality which we received from these people, the local community was very, very fantastic, so I don't leave, that's my principle that I keep one

barber, one shop for the shopping, and everyone the tailor, one barber and the doctor is one, and I'm not changing that one, so I don't want to move" (E35), "I want to stay in Glasgow, because I think that Glasgow, according to me, it's a very good city, and I know their universities, our neighbours, our friends, my friends, our institutes. I know the city very well. It is better than any other cities" (E34). The former was clear that it was Scottish society that had supported him, despite seldom leaving Glasgow. This might suggest that Scottish organisations and institutions are viewed in the opposite way from British ones in that they are seen as being more supportive. The latter felt settled in Glasgow and felt that his knowledge of how things work as well as good interpersonal relationships were key to his views of the city.

There were also other issues related to space. One respondent liked Glasgow but felt that it was too big and so would like to move somewhere smaller (E460). This respondent's past had been dominated by small villages and the size of cities were somewhat bewildering to him. Conversely there were others who liked the size of the city and also felt that the cost of living here was more balanced than in many of the alternatives. "Moving but I can say I am happy to say here in Glasgow?.....Because sometimes we compare all big cities and Glasgow, we see the life and also for the transport to compare London to here, for the life is expensive in London, here the life is quite well and also if you find a job you can't go far away, you can use just the transport. And also the good thing about here is we have to do more research in Glasgow, they are friendly, so that's why we are trying to stay with the people" (E752).

Feeling at ease within a particular area helps with overall adjustment to a new life. For some there is a learning process that suggests some element of acculturation. "I don't feel lonely here, I've learnt how I should live here, good things about these people and some bad things about these people and I change myself and I try to accept everything, they accept me so I have to accept a lot of things" (REF).

## **Poverty**

One of the main issues in this chapter that emanates from concerns in other research is that refugees are effectively being asked to integrate into poverty<sup>46</sup>. The process itself, in locating asylum seekers almost exclusively in just the most deprived communities, and which also denies them the ability to both have skills and experiences recognised and to access the employment market at an early stage plays a major role in this. However, so too do other

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<sup>46</sup> Lindsay, Dobbie and Gillespie Refugees' Experiences and Views of Poverty  
[http://www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk/policy\\_and\\_research/research\\_reports/research\\_reports\\_archive](http://www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk/policy_and_research/research_reports/research_reports_archive)

factors beyond the asylum process, such as the multitude of issues referred to in both the education and employment chapters. Prior to developing this line of thought, however, it is worthwhile highlighting how people feel about their income as the majority of people think of poverty in purely monetary terms. We asked how people felt about their household income. This gave the following results.

**Table 40 – feelings about household income – survey 1**

How do you feel about your present household income?	Percent
living comfortably on present income	5.5
copied on present income	26.1
finding it difficult to cope	37.7
finding it very difficult to cope	30.7
Total	100.0

Thus two thirds of asylum seekers and refugees are having difficulty coping on their household income, far higher than even the 15% most deprived Scottish population according to the Scottish Household Survey.

**Table 41 – Scottish Household Survey feelings about finances**

	All	Male	Female	15% Most Deprived
Manages well	49%	53%	44%	31%
Get by	39%	37%	41%	46%
Don't manage well	12%	10%	15%	23%

This finding is confirmed by the European Social Survey (ESS) data across the UK as a whole which found that 37% of people were living comfortably, 45% were coping, 14% were finding it difficult to cope and just 4% stated that they were finding it very difficult to cope. Among ethnic minority respondents in the ESS the incidence of financial difficulties rises against the overall figure but still remains considerably lower than among our sample. 9% of those in ethnic minorities in Britain were finding it very difficult to cope and a further 14% were finding it difficult to cope compared to 31% and 38% respectively among our sample.

There is a major issue regarding the poverty levels of those going through the asylum system. Asylum support levels sit well below income support levels specifically designed to be just enough to stave off poverty. While the UK Government might argue that other costs such as utility and housing are additional costs that are met by the state that serves to justify current rates, this is questionable in a number of senses. First of all low income levels are usually measured after housing costs and, for example, show that 60% of median income, the common measure of low income, stands at £199. Thus utility costs cannot be used to justify the 29% of official 'low income' levels gives to asylum seekers. Looking just at income support, for those over 25-years of age, current levels stand at £71, meaning that asylum support is currently just over half of that level. However, that level itself also falls well short of

recent work done on both the living wage and Joseph Rowntree Foundation minimum income standards, as well as the low income level mentioned above.

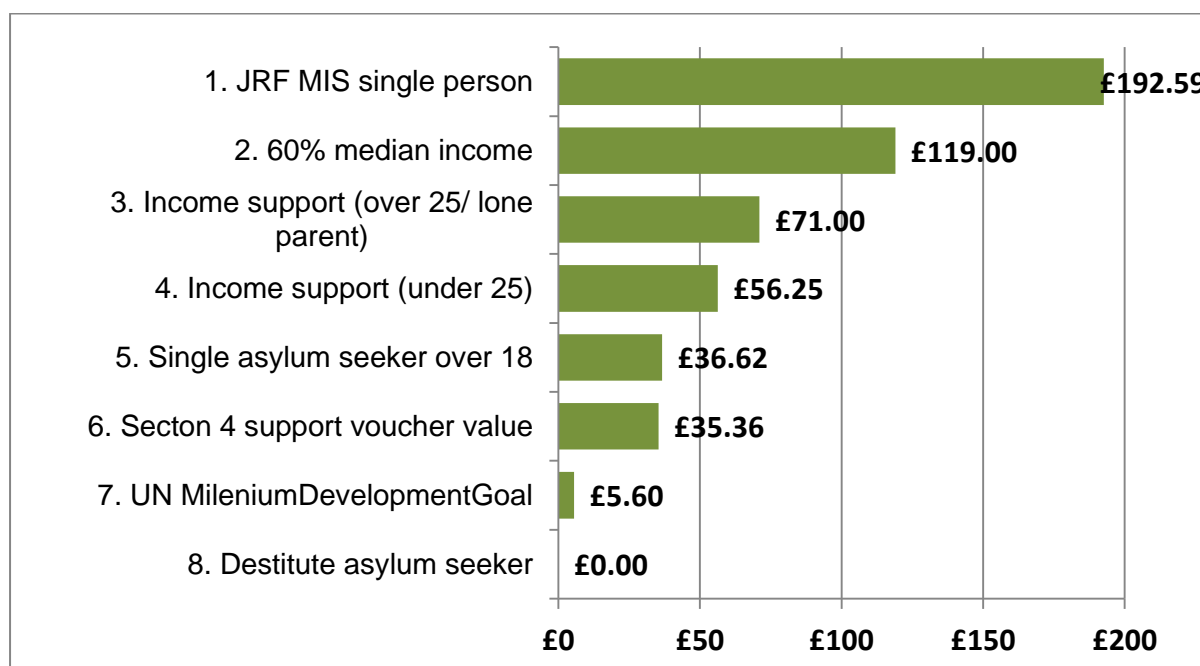


Figure 32 – indications of poverty <sup>47</sup>

The above table highlights that for asylum seekers going through the asylum process the financial concerns expressed should come as no surprise. Asylum seekers *are* living on incomes that are poverty level incomes and this has numerous ramifications. However, as shown in the bottom block of the graph, refused and destitute asylum seekers live in absolute poverty. In these cases integration is not really possible, nor is it apparently desirable. Nevertheless, the struggle to access work and the type of work that respondents can sometimes access, do not lead neatly to a life outside of poverty. Refugees report significant financial struggle, as would be expected for the very low paid and the unemployed. However, add to this the other issues of costs of securing and furnishing homes, costs of up-skilling and costs of remittances and that struggle becomes clearer.

We asked people in both surveys whether they thought they would be better off in the coming year. Among those who answered both surveys, in survey 1 some 57% thought that they would be better off in the coming year. However, 18 months on just 18% said that they were, in fact, better off, with some 37% saying that they actually felt worse off. Thus financial aspirations and expectations have not been met over the length of the research project. Nevertheless, some 47% of respondents in Survey 2 remained optimistic and felt that things

<sup>47</sup> Graph designed by Morag Gillespie as part of a study of destitution, the results of which are in [Trapped: Destitution and asylum in Scotland \(PDF\)](#)

would financially improve in the coming year. Financial aspirations are not being met yet there is an unstinting optimism about the future.

The implications of not working during the asylum process were mentioned by many of the interviewees, even those who had a relatively quick decision as a key part of their financial struggle. Many made allusions to it being like life stopping. "It's hard when you're used to working and you go somewhere where you can't use your skills, you're just....it's like your life has stopped" (E750). "You can lose your skills if, you know, eight years, nine years, you can't, what can I say? To improve to exercise your skill, but it's not good. It's very bad because you can't use it" (E460). This was seen as preventing the ability to think about the future and make any plans. This situation was likened to being put in 'cold storage', often during a period in which people are usually building their careers. "We are not allowed to work, this is the bad thing for us....for they give me status after eight years, its means during these eight years it means like you did nothing and you lost your age also.....for a lot of people when you were in your thirties is the time when you're starting to build your career, so for you, you weren't allowed to start a career" (E752). Another added that "it's not easy to just sit and wait and do nothing. Although even now it's very difficult because it's not easy to find a job at this time as well" (E751). Another talked about the feelings of rejection resulting from not working. "It makes you – I don't know how to say that – is it rejected?...Just useless yeah. As the time passes, you just get used to being unemployed", but that "if you know the benefits of the work, you try hard to get back to work because it makes your life.... Valuable, it makes your life more valuable" (E536). If people are not given the right to work during the asylum process, this along with difficulties in accessing employment condemns many to poverty.

While refugees arrive with wide variations in skills and educational levels, it appears that they are often treated homogenously. What this means in terms of poverty is that no matter what skills they have, refugees where they can find work are condemned on mass to employment in low paying sectors of the economy with little job security. Thus the reality, despite status, is that refugees join asylum seekers as being extremely vulnerable to poverty. While refugees tend to be aspirational in terms of employment and finances, there are issues regarding social exclusion. Being integrated into socially excluded communities with low income levels should not be the ultimate destiny of refugees as a homogenous mass. This is not to say that refugees are in some way 'better' than the equally excluded host community. Indeed the parallels between the two are often striking and could provide the basis for creating more solidarity with these communities. It does suggest, however, that for newcomers poverty is a constant threat and integration into poverty a very real outcome.

Status and loss of status was another key issue for many respondents in this research. Lost status often has an impact on the degree to which refugees have social contacts. On being invited to lunch by a man he worked with, one respondent stated that “If I go there with the reminder you are receiving me, when shall I receive you? This is somebody who was ...I was receiving people, doing good gestures to them, assisting them, but today he’s not able to assist” (E536). The result was turning down social contact due to not being able to reciprocate. The issue of reciprocity is an important one across social connections. People want to have contacts but don’t want to feel as if they are ‘kept’. Another respondent stated that “it was everything different, you have your life, your job, your position and so then you come here and you don’t know what’s happened here, you can’t speak easily with people” (529).

### **Normality**

As has been alluded to throughout this report, for many refugees the primary aim with regard to integration is to achieve normality. The search for sameness pervades the narratives of both refugees and asylum seekers. Part of this search is clearly related to memories of what has been left behind, both good and bad. On the good side, people refer to having lived normal lives and would like to be able to do so once more. On the bad side, the lack of normality in the past creates a visceral need to develop a normal life here. Normality was of relevance across domains of integration but is particularly evident around the issues of rights and citizenship. Equal rights and a degree of permanence were seen as the fundamental building blocks of integration. Only equality in terms of rights were seen as capable of creating equality in terms of access and equality in relation to life outcomes. Views did not come from a perspective of entitlement but instead came from a desire to merely be similar to neighbours and friends, and importantly to be seen as such. One respondent put this sameness very simply. When asked of his ambitions, he stated simply that “a job, buy a car and nice house and live in it” (E153). The desire to be the same as everyone else also related to gratitude. “Coming from another country, you get your refugee status and they integrate you in the society and they give you the new life.....Well they give you the stateless and let you feel the same as... if you survive, you feel yourself living as a human, you know? Same as you. You have a right in anything in the country. You have right in education, in medication and if you travelling going abroad, coming back to the country no problem. So there’s things that you feel yourself... you are a part of the society as well you can say” (E38)

The loss of a ‘normal’ life is acutely felt. People talk of the adjustment difficulties from this normal life, with access to resources, both financial and human, to a life without much of either (E153). One respondent stated that “it was everything different, you have your life,



your job, your position and so then you come here and you don't know what's happened here, you can't speak easily with people, you don't know if you have any problem who wants to help you or where you should go, everything is a big problem, I think big process" (529).

Normality was viewed as a goal across many aspects of integration. Social contacts and employment are perhaps the two dominant factors in both supporting or inhibiting people from being able to rebuild lives in this way. With regard to social contacts friends and neighbours and day-to-day relational issues are of huge importance. It is clear that people do not want to constantly have to justify who they are and why they are here. Therefore some relatively minor behaviour can act as a significant spur to how people feel about their lives. Respondents speak of simple greetings making an impact, as do getting involved in joint interests such as watching (E684). These types of relationships where they did exist were treated in two contradictory ways simultaneously. At the same time as trying to play things down due to relationships being viewed as not out of the ordinary, there was also a desire to highlight and even celebrate such things. This duality perhaps suggests an important temporal issue, that normality in social relations can take some time and requires a degree of encouragement.

With regard to employment the search for normality was more fraught with difficulties. Respondents speak of the social interactions with work colleagues as being important in normalising lives. Again day-to-day interactions rather than any profound moment of change are viewed as of most importance. That said, the disjuncture between employment in countries of origin and those here can mean that status and loss of status issues emerge which inhibit the normalising role of employment. That said, any employment is viewed by most as a normalising.

People talk of the adjustment difficulties from relatively normal lives in the past, although what people are forced to flee from is anything but normal, with access to resources, both financial and human, to a life without much of either (E153). One respondent stated that "Worst thing I think when I think I lost my position and I'm here that sometimes even teenager are laughing to me and it's very bad feeling. I think it's the worst when I think I was...I had normal life, I had my level in my country" (E529). He went on that "I didn't think about work....it was just feeling for myself, I remember that I was thinking how I missed everything that I had before in my country and I came to a new....without any future" (E529).

Sense of belonging can be a key factor in whether people feel integrated or not. This sense of belonging is often to a spatial unit much smaller than a nation state, and indeed often considerably smaller than a city. That said, many respondents made reference to wishing to

give something back to Scotland, as the place they identify as having provided safety to them. However, this is somewhat different to a sense of belonging. A number of our participants said they felt a sense of belonging to Glasgow. For some this was counter posed with not knowing anywhere else in the UK. For others it was simply that people and place were things to be appreciated. One said “The Glasgow is a great people.....most of the people is great....it a great nation, this is a very good community and society” (E657).

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has looked at a number of issues around what and where refugees integrate. The first issue was that of space. On the whole refugees feel that the spatial unit into which they can and/or do integrate is a small one. Although many talk of being welcomed in Scotland and Glasgow and feeling some sense of belonging to them, a more widely held view is that integration and identification happens at the more local level, suggesting the need for more local forms of support. Another major issue is that of socio-economics. The neighbourhoods in which refugees and asylum seekers live tend to be among the most deprived. Added to that, the low levels of support paid to those in the asylum process, and the high levels of unemployment and underemployment and the issue that emerges is that we are effectively asking refugees to integrate into poverty. On a more positive level one of the main drives for respondents is the desire for normality. Partly due to adjustment problems and lost status there is a real desire to be seen as normal and sameness becomes the goal of integration. The need for equal rights, and actionable ones as well as equal on paper is a key part of this. With equality comes normality and only normality truly allows refugees to rebuild their lives here.

## CHAPTER 10 – HOW REFUGEES FEEL ABOUT LIVING IN SCOTLAND

### How refugees feel about living here?

In both surveys we left space at the end for respondents to articulate what they felt to be the three best and the three worst things about living here. We also asked in surveys and in interviews what one thing they would like to say to the people or Government in Scotland. A selection of responses are below:

### Worst thing about living here

There were a large number of issues raised by respondents regarding what they thought was the worst thing about their lives in the UK, from basic issues like the weather (E38) to more substantive issues. An interesting issue raised by a number of respondents was the rate of change in immigration law which made their stay feel somewhat precarious. “About the government in Glasgow, in Scotland, in whole UK, you know, sometimes change law, you know.....for example, today, so far, so different from tomorrow, you know. Tomorrow is next week, you know, every week, every month, every year, change, change, change, you know. If they changed laws for long time, it's no problem. But every day, every week, every.....maybe Scottish people are still confused about change, change, change, you know” (Far 27). There were further complaints about the existing rules (E430). One respondent was more direct, stating that the worst thing was the Home Office. “I'd not really say anything about...apart from the Home Office, though, I'd not really say anything bad about the Scottish people, honestly, because they are very, very helpful and I think they are friendly. So I don't see anything bad with them so far” (E58). Another said it was their experiences of UKBA. “The kind of experiences I've had here are mostly in the UK Border.....It's because they are the people who torture other people. It's like, you see, I'm a sick person, if I tell you something which I probably know, I wish I a hundred percent knew that it is true, and then you tell me I'm a liar in my face” (E279). He went on to add that racists and racism was also one of the worst things but he rationalised this to the extent that all people are subject to some level of discrimination.

Among both asylum seekers and refugees the denial of the right to work was a key problem with living in Britain. For asylum seekers the denial of that right prevented them getting on with their lives and left them in poverty in many cases (E657), while for many refugees there was a hangover effect from their period when they were denied the right to work. There was also a more general issue for refugees regarding the problems they had in trying to access the labour market.

One respondent synchronised the criticism of the Government and the right to work. "About the government is they shouldn't call everybody a liar because they should try to understand people. If they don't want to give...if like, they're making life hard for us, like section four or whatever, well, I'm grateful it is there because it's better than nothing.....But if they don't want...let them give us permission to work. I think I can survive on my own, I can work and survive. If I can't find a job then they can...they should not support me until I find myself a job I can do" (E279).

For others the worst thing about being here is in a sense not being there. There was strong evidence of homesickness among many respondents. "And the worst thing, is that I miss my country, miss my family...yes, and always I...like, how can I say it, I wish and I hope that my country has a chance to be civilised and highly educated like here in Britain, and we have the right to live in.....my country, and I wish it to be a good country, so as to return to it" (E535). This loneliness also extended to the attempt to get family members over here through family reunion processes. "In certain ways the process from the time I've sought asylum to be given my status was so swift. And miraculous in its own way. But the process of getting me my family it's like a nightmare. How is it that they find it easy to write and say, (respondent's name) we have given you your stay, understanding the persecution I would face if I went back. But at the same time, refusing to give me my family?" (E140).

For some general attitudes have ramifications across numerous areas that were identified as the broad 'worst' thing about living here. One linked employment, age and skills with views of foreigners. "I come across with people, they have low opinion about foreign people which some of that I can understand, because some foreigners do something they shouldn't do. I can understand that, but to Government, you know, I personally find it hard to get a job, part of it might be my fault but, you know, when I came here I was thirty-eight, I was ten years younger than now, I was more able to go to the job and practise a job and try to learn some.....skills to get a job, they didn't let me, you know, they refuse to give me work permission and they even refused to put me through certain courses because I was free, I had plenty of time to go to colleges to learn some new skills, but I wasn't allowed due to my situation. That's maybe...that might be helpful for Government" (E541).

One interviewee felt that still feeling like a stranger was the worst thing about living here. The view expressed was that the past needed to be forgotten in order to get on with integrating here, clearly more difficult if people only have temporary leave to remain. "Yeah. Thinking about the worst thing. Maybe till now I feel I'm a stranger in this country. And I try to find an easier way to integrate in this country. This is requiring time. I need to begin, not from zero, but say begin from the first step. So that requires time. I have to forget my history in this

country, my country and build a new one in this country. At my age it's difficult to begin from the beginning. I did what I did in my country. But it still is very useful for me to begin here. Till now I've got my knowledge my experience, but I need just a chance, just an opportunity you know to prove to the people I can do something beneficial again" (E33).

### **Best thing about living here**

A widely held view about the best thing about living in Scotland was the help and support available to people here. Examples of this view are, "Well the good, they've helped us as refugees, like I say, in some countries they don't care about refugees and they don't care about what situation you are in, or what you are running away from, but in Glasgow they've been so helpful, yeah. Hmm. Do I have anything that is bad? No" (E750). Another was more specific about the support received from Scottish Refugee Council. "About Refugee Council, I just tell them that all people work here thank you so much, you know, try to support us, try to support asylum seeker refugee. And really, really helpful, useful for us. And everybody lost hope, lose hope came to the Refugee Council, and the Refugee Council try to help them, any woman, any man. Very nice, you know. I've been here many times for any problem or any reason. I've been here, all of them very kind, very nice talking to me, make appointment, everything. My social worker, caseworker, every...it's very nice people and I want to tell you and thank you so much, you know" (Far27).

Others expressed the friendliness of people here as being the best thing about living in Scotland, along with a general view that Scotland is a good place to be. "I think for myself the good thing about living in Scotland for maybe the life is good, and it's not so expensive if you compare to London or to Paris or other big cities. And people are friendly; in general that's what I can say. We know we have some bad things, but we have to try to do again more to I can say to move things forward all around Scotland I can say to make things good" (E752). "The best thing is because you are living in Scotland that's the best, I don't know, but I wouldn't live in anywhere else .....everything's fine and the people have a lot of respect in you and so you are like just any other people who are from here" (E153). "I can say I feel very, very comfortable in Scotland" (E460). Another respondent felt welcome and even that he had felt 'saved' (E58).

Friendships are identified as an important positive impact of life here. "There are good things I'm saying about most of the people and mostly they're happy to meet a lot of people, different people, like I've got, like as I say, in the beginning as well I've got all the good friends I have around me other way you cannot survive and this I have as well, good friends and family around you" (E430). Many people compared friendliness here favourably with their experiences in other parts of the UK. One was apologetic about being critical of

England. "People are so friendly in Scotland, if you ask me down in England, I wouldn't say that, sorry about that, but people in...especially in Glasgow, people are so friendly and you wouldn't feel uncomfortable to approach people to be friendly with them in return" (E541).

Not being in a dangerous country was also raised by a number of respondents. One said "The best thing is it's a peaceful country. The main difference from my country and the UK is the peace, which is quite important for me" (E535). Another agreed and said "good things mainly I'm happy that in this time I'm not in (country of origin) because of my government, when I see how they are killing people and everything, and so that I'm happy I'm learning English, I have more opportunity" (E529). Although being free from such danger is important for everyone it is even more so for those with children. "The best thing, as I told you, because we came from very hard circumstances, our country. I found here much safer. I found here more comfortable to live in, especially to my kids" (E33).

Institutions were also mentioned as 'good things' about living here. One felt that the organisation of society was a positive thing. "The rules, the system. The system, the organised, and many fields in the society. Clean, the universities, libraries, it's very good libraries, there's many services to walk to anything. This is of course manifold, many things. It's very good I think yes" (E34). Although somewhat cynical about it not being practiced, the principle of equal opportunities was also mentioned as a positive, to be contrasted with experiences elsewhere. "Well what has been good about living here is the fact that they try and offer equal opportunity to everybody. I mean that's the policy what's written in black and white. Whether it's practiced is entirely something else. And what's been good is at the end of the day as long as we are here, maybe you have a health problem, it will be taken care of. There's primary health care, you've got GPs where you stay and you have referral centres, you've got hospitals, and you've got, believe you me if I listed my list of specialists who are looking after me, you'd smile" (E140). The opportunity for development was also alluded to by another interviewee. "Getting the opportunity to develop myself and find myself on a top career.....I see myself having an opportunity to go somewhere with education, that's the most important thing. I'm still focusing, it doesn't matter how old am I, but I still know I can achieve something, I can make a certain goal and the opportunity's there" (E144). The effect of accessing good health care was to not only improve physical health, but also mental health and was seen as increasing confidence (E140).

A final and important point raised about the most positive things about living here was that for the first time in his life, one individual felt safe. "About good in Scotland is I felt safe.....since my life begun this is the first place I've felt safe. About bad is I want people all

to understand that we are all human beings, black or white, and we don't come here because we want to come here, we don't know about Scotland when we're in Africa" (E279).

### **What would you say to the Government or people of Scotland?**

A final question asked of participants was if they had one thing they could say to either the Scottish Government, the Scottish people or both, what would it be. Below is what some of them said.

"I ask the government if... I suggest for the Home Office please you temporarily give the volunteer work if you not pay, no problem you pay everything. But you give the volunteer work at least for asylum seeker, that you if you need to volunteer work maybe two, three days or four days" (E657)

"I can tell them just as I said before, it's good to be nice with people. For example if I am new in the country, if I am bad you will see if I am bad maybe you can say how you have move from me, but if I am good yes keep going. We have to learn from each other, we have to know ourselves how to be nice to not only all the time to be scared because I am black or because I am a foreigner or some negative thing" (E752)

"For them to go to studies because there is people, I know the people who've been here for ten years, he's a British citizen now and he can't speak English..... help them to finance it to...not thinking about getting the money or to go to work, just for like a couple of years to learn English, that's better for the person and for the government, you know" (E153)

"Just to say to them to keep supporting refugees and asylum seekers, continue to welcome them to do more and more and I don't know. Because we feel like this is our home. We want to stay here to, work here, because many asylum seekers and refugees have got skills and maybe they can, what can I say, in the future to contribute and just .....Yeah, to use their skill to help to contribute in Scotland helping people, that's all I can say" (E460).

"I think the first thing, thank you because of they help to people like me that they are a lot...sometimes I thinking people of Scotland are...I don't know about UK, of course all of them, how they are kind. When I'm on the bus I see mostly fine people then, Scottish people, African, Asian, Chinese, Indian, a lot and a few Scottish people in there and it's nice and it's a...it's shows how they are...they have a big heart I think and it's important for me because they accepted some people like me that we...I felt...I don't know about them, I felt I don't have any place to live and I came here and I start my new life" (E529)

“I think the government is nowadays cutting funds to the firms that help refugees and help people to integrate. I think they have to stop that because they're really doing a great job in helping people...actually, there should be more investment in those firms, and help them to help people to try to find work..... Because when you're new in a society or in a country, you're just lost, you don't know what to do, where to go, and you need people to guide you, to help you and to let you feel that you're worthwhile and you can do things” (E536)

“Governments and people they can have a look at asylum in a positive way. That's not all, because they are all not the same people. There are some people who are making trouble for refugees somewhere, but not all the people. They are not here to cause any problems, they can do some jobs in this country. Even if it's a small, little job, maybe part-time 10 hours a week. There are many factors which if we ask the Government for help they could help the asylum seekers or refugees. They can have a look at the refugees in a better way, in a positive way - people and Government....., I'd like to be in society. Even if they gave me a voluntary job once a week, even if they gave me a little money for food” (E681).

“I'd like to say to them honestly I am a good person. I'm here to help you as much as I can. I need just your help and support to progress and go ahead. I'm not wicked or harmful person, so just give me a chance to prove I'm a good person. That's it. Because I need just an opportunity to go ahead” (E33).

“These people are vulnerable people, you should have a good sympathy with them, don't hate them, because they are suffering, they fled from their country, their home, so we just giving them opportunity for the time being, so think about it, that if you were in their place what you should have thought. So welcome them and just support them, not to hate them. Not all the people are bad, five fingers are not the same, refugees there are bad people there as well, but not all of them, mostly they are educated people and they want to, if they are not educated they want to get education here, to become a good citizen to become a good part of the community” (E35).

“I want to make to me chance to join in the society, to serve the society and to invest my experience, my.....and skills, to preserve this society, but until now I cannot, not from the government, government society or organisation, and society, especially private sector. Yes. This is our... my hope in the future” (E34)

“So about my experiences in Scotland it's not... it's about one year and a half now, and my experience in Scotland is very good. People are friendly and I found the life here, new life,



good education, healthcare etc. And you feel yourself same as the Scottish man, you have all the rights same as him. The only one you can't get is the vote" (E38).

"It would not be complaining. If I have anything to say, it would not be complaining that there is not this, there is not that. Because I have my eyes to see and if there's anything I don't have, I can see that discuss and say I don't have it. So I can only thank the people of Scotland for treating me like the Scottish themselves" (E382).

## CHAPTER 11 - CONCLUSION

Ager and Strang's 'Indicators of Integration' framework, developed for the Home Office in 2004<sup>48</sup> provides the best available heuristic device in which to examine refugee integration. It usefully highlights that integration is made up of both processes *and* outcomes and that these, be they 'domains', 'facilitators' or 'foundations' are all interlinked. Implicit in the framework, but perhaps deserving of more attention, is emotional or psychological integration. How people feel about their lives and where they live is impacted by, and has an impact on, all other aspects of integration. Nevertheless, the utility of the framework, from the perspective of this research project, is not in doubt. What is very much in doubt, however, is the UK Government's willingness to learn the lessons of the research evidence, and to use the framework in its entirety. Refugee integration needs support, it is not always an entirely organic process if taken as these complex series of processes and outcomes. The UKBA's own Survey of New Refugees highlighted the need for state support, particularly around language and employment<sup>49</sup>, but the UK Government at the same time as releasing this research ended all support for refugee integration. This approach is counter-productive as the lack of support then has knock-on effects on the degree to which refugees can successfully rebuild their lives and fully contribute to the society and community in which they live. In Scotland, results from this research study are being used in a more innovative way, in addressing integration as a multi-faceted set of inter-related issues, as Ager and Strang suggest it is<sup>50</sup>. The Scottish Government has been undertaking a process of developing an integration strategy for asylum seekers and refugees through wide engagement with public and voluntary sector bodies in a series of thematic meetings (following Ager and Strang's framework), as well as a number of integrating core group meetings<sup>51</sup>. The approach of the Scottish Government, although the results of the strategy process are still being developed, could serve as a blueprint for how to view, contextualise, consult and address integration in a rounded and holistic way. Regardless of how this strategy develops, there are other processes that inevitably impact upon integration.

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<sup>48</sup> Ager and Strang (2004) <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs04/dpr28.pdf>

<sup>49</sup> Cebulla A., M. Daniel and A. Zurawan (2010) Spotlight on refugee integration: findings from the Survey of New Refugees in the United Kingdom. Home Office Research Report 37. London: RDS, Home Office. <http://rds.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs10/horr37b.pdf>

<sup>50</sup> Ager and Strang (2010) Refugee integration: emerging trends and remaining agendas *Journal of Refugee Studies* 23:4 Page 603

<sup>51</sup> The plan is that six one-off thematic meetings take place in 2012-13 covering housing, health, education, employment and welfare, community and social connections, and the needs of newly arrived asylum seekers. Relevant agencies were invited to participate in each. Output from the thematic meetings will feed into a core group, consisting of a number of key agencies. This core group is independently chaired and will meet three times to draw together output and develop a cohesive strategy.

One of the key processes that has long term impacts on refugee integration is the asylum process itself. This research project has demonstrated the many ways in which the asylum process produces unintended impacts which nevertheless have long-term ramifications. Without attempting to go over all of the issues highlighted in the research, the impacts of enforced poverty, made worse by asylum seekers having no right to work and with subsequent effects on educational possibilities, employment opportunities and mental health ensure that the costs of the asylum process to individuals and to the public purse are far higher than need be. A more humane asylum process would not only allow refugees to rebuild their lives here both more fully and quicker, but would also allow them to make the contribution to their new society that all research evidence suggests they want to make. The asylum process therefore acts to slow, or in some cases even stop integration processes.

What is more, evidence from this research also supports Ager and Strang's assertion that policy has a limiting impact<sup>52</sup>. Ager and Strang point out that policy which continually emphasises limitation and control undermines integration, not the least of which is due to the ways refugees are subsequently characterised in popular discourse. There is a 'perfect storm' of Government over-activity in the field of refugee and asylum policy, and a media that consistently portrays asylum seekers simultaneously as economic migrants in search of employment *and* as people here for the simple reasons of getting welfare benefits, an incompatible construction and one that is contrary to all existing evidence. This research project suggests that refugees are fully aware of the way the media and UK politicians (most differentiate between the UK Government and the Scottish Government in this regard) construct them and there is a suggestion that this can impact on a crucial area of Ager and Strang's framework, that of bonds, bridges and connections. The suggestion in this research is that the portrayal of refugees in the media, and a policy focus on control can encourage refugees to look internally at the bonds aspect of connections, but that that construction discourages the building of bridges between communities, and also acts to create enduring walls of distrust between refugee communities and state institutions. Thus policy and the media inhibit the creation of social connections.

This project also, however, supports Ager and Strang's contention that integration, and much of the work that encourages and supports integration, happens at the local level. The UK Government talk simultaneously of localism *and* the notion of integration being about more national and ephemeral 'British values'. What this research finds is that sense of belonging, the emotional integration mentioned above, happens most at the level of neighbourhoods. Refugees do not feel they can integrate into Britain, and certainly not an ill-defined set of

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<sup>52</sup> Ager and Strang (2010) Refugee integration: emerging trends and remaining agendas; Journal of Refugee Studies 23:4 Page (595)

values that are supposed to represent what Britain is. Instead, refugees integrate into their neighbourhood, their communities and in some cases their city. As already stated, however, the bridging dimensions of integration sometimes require support. It is evident in this research project that localities with integration networks and/or with existing community activism support the integration process better. Ager and Strang point out that more work needs to be done within existing communities<sup>53</sup>. This is an assertion that the results of this research would fully support.

Linked to that, however, is the importance of perceptions of communities in Scotland. Participants talked at length of their initial attempts to have close and friendly relations with their neighbours. This is viewed as entirely natural when refugees think of their neighbourhoods in their countries of origin. The view is that Scottish neighbourhoods lack the social contact that refugees are used to, although there is little suggestion of them being excluded, rather Scottish neighbours do not have close relations with each other either. Taking on the view that to integrate is to 'fit-in' and perhaps mimic the behaviour of locals, the result is that the superficial friendliness is effectively copied and so integration becomes about mimicking the non-neighbourliness of those they see around them.

Another key issue to emerge from the research is the temporal. There is no clear answer as to the length of time it takes for refugees to feel integrated as refugees are not a homogenous group. That is, they come with different backgrounds and histories and from different countries and are subsequently affected differently by the policies and environment in which they now live. However, what is clear, and again this supports Ager and Strang's work, is that refugees begin the process or processes of integration as soon as they arrive and feel safe enough to contemplate the future. As Ager and Strang point out, what begins immediately on arrival is either integration or alienation. The UK Government's prescription that asylum seekers should not be integrated is contrary to how people seeking asylum feel and behave. The Scottish Government's view of integration from the day of arrival more closely resembles the reality, although as already mentioned, the problems inherent in the asylum process and therefore beyond the purview of the Scottish Government limit what can be done in Scotland.

There are also two sets of particularities evident in the research findings. The first and most important is the particularity of the refugee. Migration as a whole is subject to constant debate, despite recent claims that it has been a subject off-limits and never discussed. Nevertheless, refugees are both a very particular migrant group, and a particular section of

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<sup>53</sup> Ager and Strang (2010) Refugee integration: emerging trends and remaining agendas *Journal of Refugee Studies* 23:4 Page 602

the overall Scottish population, with their own needs. With regard to being a particular migrant group with differing interests or needs compared to other migrant groups, there are two sets of issues that this research highlights. The first is that only refugees go through the asylum process with all of the problems associated with it. The enduring impact of enforced reliance on the state, no-choice in practically any aspects of their lives and the culture of disbelief in relation to decision-making have impacts that no other migrant group will experience. The other particularity of refugees concerns future options. Other migrants on other types of visas always have the option, whether a desirable one or not, to return to their country of origin. This is not available to refugees. They therefore require more Government attention with regard to helping them feel that they belong here, as it is not possible any longer for them to belong 'there'. A part of that belonging also relates to security of tenure, with the present 5 years' of refugee status often hampering both sense of belonging and with it integration. With regard to the overall Scottish population, the closest comparator in many senses would be to those Scots facing various degrees of financial struggle and all of the additional issues that such financial struggle triggers. However, there are also other obstacles that refugees must overcome. They often lack many of the social connections and social supports available to 'locals'; they lack educational and/or employment histories here; there are gaps in knowledge of how processes and structures work; and security of stay in the country is uncertain. They therefore require some additional early interventions to clear the path to more complete integration.

The other particularity is that of Scotland. As already mentioned, the Scottish Government, under both the Scottish National Party and the previous Labour/Liberal Democrat coalition, have taken the approach that integration should begin on day one. Ager and Strang point out that there are many factors that distinguish how integration is operationalised. Taken together with refugees experiencing integration or alienation on arrival, this distinction is an important one. Although there is no evidence of the practical difference this makes to the lives of refugees in Scotland, its symbolic importance should not be underestimated as symbolism does have an effect<sup>54</sup>. This comparison is also one that the researcher will be making in the coming years in his role as Research Fellow at the University of Glasgow. What is more, the Scottish Government has been innovative, so far, in their development of a multi-dimensional strategy for refugee integration.

Ager and Strang correctly point to rights as a foundation of citizenship<sup>55</sup>. What is more, they argue and this research confirms that refugees themselves also see equal rights as a

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<sup>54</sup> See for example Murray Edleman 'The Symbolic Uses of Politics'

<sup>55</sup> Ager and Strang (2010) Refugee integration: emerging trends and remaining agendas *Journal of Refugee Studies* 23:4 Page 594

foundational issue. Only by having equal rights do refugees feel that they will be seen as equal by citizens. However, there is also a gap between the existence of rights and the ability to use them. The right to work for refugees, for example, is hampered by a series of other issues such as lack of skill recognition, lack of social networks and language issues. Paper based or theoretical rights do provide some sense of equality, but the absence of equality in terms of outcomes and in terms of perceptions means real equality remains elusive. The normality that refugees crave can only truly occur once rights in all senses have been realised in practice.

Refugees, as Ager and Strang point out, are strongly motivated to avoid dependence<sup>56</sup>. Indeed what emerges from this research report is that not only do refugees want to be self-sufficient, they are also imbued with a desire to make a major contribution to society, both because that is what they feel they should do, and because they feel grateful to Scotland for providing safety to them and their families. However, as has been highlighted throughout this report there are significant barriers facing refugees as they try to contribute. Many of these barriers are of institutional types, although there are also some more personal and relational barriers as well. Ager and Strang point out that “it is the responsibility of the ‘host’ society to create the conditions to enable integration” (601). At present that responsibility is not being fully met. While there are positive developments in neighbourhoods and even in terms of Scottish Government policy and rhetoric, thus far it has not been enough, at least in part due to institutional constraints of the UK Government and the asylum process. As such refugees are integrating to the degree that they are despite rather than because of UK Government policy and in this sense the ‘host’ society is therefore not enabling integration. As one refugee told us “integrating people is simply more than just relocating them, it should be about educating them and helping them to contribute their values in a positive way within their communities through engagement irrespective of their status” (E185).

## **Recommendations**

The recommendations in this report are brief and broad brush rather than specific. Many of the findings are currently being used by the Scottish Government in the development of their integration strategy, and so remaining recommendations would focus primarily on the UK Government. The issues in the control of the UK Government are highlighted throughout and would be too extensive to duplicate here. Four broad sets of recommendations are therefore highlighted here.

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<sup>56</sup> Ager and Strang (2010) Refugee integration: emerging trends and remaining agendas *Journal of Refugee Studies* 23:4 Page 600

1. A more humane asylum process would be better for those going through the asylum system, but would also have longer term positive impacts on society generally as refugees would integrate more fully and more quickly. This would also be cost effective for the government if refugees were enabled to rebuild their lives and begin to contribute to society, as they desire to do. The present system seeks to both control and infantilise refugees and this has enduring effects on their independence in the future.
2. Linked to this, integration or alienation does begin from the day of arrival. Government must either accept that to be the case and therefore support the integration of those going through the asylum process, or else they will have to deal with the many consequences highlighted in this research of the enforced marginalisation of refugees, many of whom will go on to become naturalised.
3. The UK Government, and indeed all levels of government, must assess the support required to enable asylum seekers and refugees to rebuild their lives and contribute as full and equal members of society. The hands-off approach clearly does not work. This means the need for integration support, and the need for refugees to have security of tenure in the UK.
4. The Scottish Government's process of reviewing refugee integration could be seen as a model of best practice. The involvement of refugees, the voluntary sector, community organisations and statutory bodies in interactive development work, with research informing discussion has been innovative and other governments could potentially carry out similar work.

This research project has also contributed to the researcher obtaining a fellowship that will allow a similar process to be undertaken with diverse migrant communities in cities across the UK. The fellowship will also look at policy, be it national, regional or local and its impact on integration and will hopefully have a similar impact in relation to government thinking as the refugee integration research has had on Scottish Government thinking.

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