

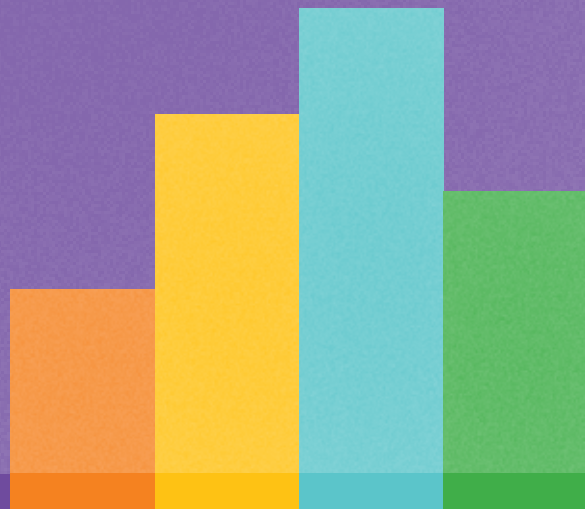


Settlement  
Council  
of Australia

# **NATIONAL SETTLEMENT WORKFORCE PROFILE 2023-24**

## **Workers Survey Results**

FINAL REPORT  
May 2024



**Settlement Council of Australia (SCOA)**

May 2024

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The National Settlement Workforce Profile 2023-24 was developed and implemented in collaboration with SCOA members and key settlement sector stakeholders.

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# Table of Contents

<b>Acknowledgements</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>List of figures</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>List of tables</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>Executive summary</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>1. Introduction</b> .....	<b>8</b>
1.1 What is a Workforce Profile? .....	8
1.2 Why did SCOA develop a workforce profile? .....	8
1.3 Who participated in the surveys? .....	8
<b>2. Overview of survey content and method</b> .....	<b>9</b>
<b>3. Results and discussion</b> .....	<b>10</b>
3.1 Total number of responses .....	10
3.2 Location of workers .....	10
3.3 Programs delivered .....	10
3.4 Demographics of the workforce .....	12
3.4.1 Age .....	12
3.4.2 Gender .....	12
3.4.3 Cultural and linguistic diversity .....	12
3.5 Lived experience of migration or forced displacement .....	14
3.6 Job roles .....	14
3.6.1 Main role .....	14
3.6.2 Direct-client contact activities .....	16
3.7 Employment status .....	17
3.7.1 Employment type .....	17
3.7.2 Remuneration .....	17
3.8. Work History .....	17
3.8.1: Experience working in the settlement sector .....	17
3.8.2: Experience working outside the settlement sector .....	18
3.10 Professional development priorities .....	20
3.11 Supervision .....	20
3.11.1 Type of supervision .....	20
3.11.2 Frequency of supervision .....	20
<b>4. Conclusion</b> .....	<b>22</b>

## List of figures

Figure 1: Distribution of total number of national settlement workforce per state and territory . . . .	11
Figure 2: Distribution of proportion of respondents per setting types (metro, regional, rural) . . . . .	11
Figure 3: Distribution of respondents across program type . . . . .	11
Figure 4: Age distribution of national settlement workforce . . . . .	12
Figure 5: Gender distribution of national settlement workforce . . . . .	13
Figure 6: Distribution of respondents' (n=429) nationality (country of birth) . . . . .	13
Figure 7: Distribution of respondents (n=432) when asked if they speak another language than English at home . . . . .	13
Figure 8: Lived experience distribution for the national settlement workforce . . . . .	14
Figure 9: Distribution of respondents' main role and lived experience . . . . .	15
Figure 10: Breakdown of activities on which workers (in direct client service role) spent most of their time . . . . .	16
Figure 11: Distribution of employment types . . . . .	17
Figure 12: Distribution of respondents' (n=409) years of experience working in the settlement sector (anywhere in Australia) . . . . .	19
Figure 13: Distribution of respondents' background if worked outside the settlement sector . . . . .	19
Figure 14: Distribution of supervision type . . . . .	21
Figure 15: Distribution of supervision frequency . . . . .	21

## List of tables

Table 1. Overview of survey structure and content . . . . .	9
Table 2: Distribution of workers within each state and territory . . . . .	10
Table 3: Percentages of workers for each age group . . . . .	12
Table 4: Respondents' main role . . . . .	15

# Executive Summary

A strong settlement sector is critical to supporting communities and meeting the needs of migrants and refugees who are making Australia their new home.

It is paramount that the settlement workforce is equipped and supported in delivering best practice and quality consistent services. The 2023-24 National Settlement Workforce Workers Survey (Workers Survey) was undertaken by the Settlement Council of Australia (SCOA) to inform national workforce planning and workforce development initiatives. This survey provides a comprehensive picture of the settlement workforce which will form a basis for ongoing data tracking, designing training solutions as part of the *Road to Belonging Strategy*, and capacity building of the settlement workforce.

All organisations delivering funded specialist services to migrants and refugees were invited to participate in the National Settlement Workforce Profile (the Workforce Profile), which included both a Workers Survey administered to workers in participating organisations and an Organisation Survey completed by an Executive or delegate. This report only presents the findings from the Workers Survey.

## Workforce profile

A total of 515 respondents completed the Workers Survey. Most of the workforce is comprised of people with lived experience, who draw on their lived experience for their work, as is outlined further below. The majority were working for the Humanitarian Settlement Program (48%) and Settlement Engagement and Transition Support Program (31%) and most were based in metropolitan locations (75%). Almost two-thirds of people in the settlement workforce were women (70%) and just under a third were men (29%). Most workers (30%) were aged between 35-44 years. The settlement workforce included a range of occupation in various roles, and the largest cohort comprises settlement-specific case managers (18%).

## Lived experience

More than two thirds (78%) of workers reported having lived experience of migration or forced displacement or having a family member who has. For some occupations such as social worker or bilingual/bicultural worker, over 90% of respondents reported having lived experience, while for both case managers and case workers this proportion was 83%. The majority of workers used a language other than English for work (75%), were born overseas (76%), and spoke a language other than English at home (75%).

## Employment conditions

Most respondents reported being employed on a full-time basis (72%) with just under half (47%) being employed on permanent contracts. On average, when combining full-time and part-time, about 41% of the workforce was earning more than the average Australian income.

## Qualifications and experience

Workers held qualifications in Community Services (68%), with the majority holding a Diploma (31.8%) and/or qualifications in other relevant areas (84%) such as health, social and behavioural sciences, TESOL, or teaching.

The settlement workforce contained a combination of experienced workers and those new to the sector, with the average years working in the settlement sector (anywhere in Australia) being 7.3 years. Of the respondents, 43% had worked for less than 5 years, and 35% for 10 years or more.

## Conclusion

This report shows the workforce is diverse, skilled, educated and experienced. Given the high levels of lived experience, the workforce is both a reflection of, and an asset to, achieving positive settlement outcomes. Moreover, this report ensures that next steps are grounded in a strong evidence base, and aligned to the strengths and needs of Australia's settlement workers.

# 1. Introduction

This report presents the results from the National Settlement Sector Workforce Profile conducted in 2023-24. The Settlement Council of Australia (SCOA) conducted the National Settlement Workforce Profile (the Workforce Profile) to help us better map the settlement workforce. This report provides a comprehensive picture of the settlement workforce, which assists SCOA in being more responsive to the specific needs and aspirations of settlement workers as a peak body. Importantly, it also allows us to celebrate the many unique strengths of our workforce.

All organisations delivering funded specialist services to migrants and refugees were invited to participate in the National Settlement Workforce Profile. Two surveys comprise the Workforce Profile, they are:

- a Workers Survey administered to workers in participating organisations (Workers Survey); and
- an Organisation Survey completed by an Executive Officer or manager at each participating organisation (Organisation Survey).

For the purposes of this report, we will be presenting the results from the Workers Survey with a focus on demographics, employment status and qualifications. In total, this survey received 515 responses overall, across the six survey content sections, although not all respondents answered every question.

Over time and as the survey is administered periodically, the Workforce Profile will continuously monitor outcomes relating to workforce capacity, ensuring SCOA's capacity building work rests on a strong evidence base. This first report will have a tangible impact as it forms a foundation for designing training solutions as part of the *Road to Belonging Strategy* as well as capacity building of the settlement workforce in Australia<sup>1</sup>. Specifically, the data on the different demographics, roles, experiences, and backgrounds of employees, as well as organisational structures and existing training, all form a rich basis for implementing well-considered training solutions.

## 1.1 What is a workforce profile?

A workforce profile provides a map of an organisation, or in this case, of the settlement sector. It outlines the different demographics, roles, experiences, and backgrounds of staff. It also paints a picture of organisational structures and existing training. All of this provides a baseline for predicting future needs, workforce development, planning and is a good sector advocacy tool.

## 1.2 Why did SCOA develop a workforce profile?

Through the *Road to Belonging Strategy*, SCOA worked with a range of different settlement organisations, peak bodies, government departments and other key stakeholders to co-design a shared ambition and roadmap for the settlement sector. This Strategy focusses on six areas for action, including supporting workforce and organisational capacity. Under the Strategy, there is a working group tasked with developing and implementing an improved training approach for the settlement sector workforce as well as supporting structured professional development for people with lived experience in the settlement sector. The working group identified that first step towards progressing this body of work, is to map and better understand the settlement workforce.

## 1.3 Who participated in the surveys?

All organisations delivering funded specialist services to migrants and refugees were invited to participate in the National Settlement Workforce Profile. The Workers Survey was to be completed by any staff involved in the delivery of settlement services, which means people in permanent, contract or casual positions as well as volunteers. As for the Organisation Survey, it was completed by an Executive Officer or manager at each participating service.

In this 2023-24 National Settlement Workforce Profile, 515 workers responded to the Workers Survey, and 18 organisations responded to the Organisation Survey. However, not all questions were answered by all survey respondents.

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<sup>1</sup> The *Road to Belonging Strategy* is a five-year collective strategy for the Australian settlement sector, led by SCOA and funded by the Department of Home Affairs. You can read more about the *Road to Belonging Strategy* here: <https://scoa.org.au/road-to-belonging/>



## 2. Overview of survey content and method

The Workers Survey is comprised of seven sections that address major workforce development topics. Table 1 provides an overview of the survey structure and content.

**Table 1. Overview of survey structure and content**

Part		Topics
Intro	Introduction text	Survey information on purpose, target audience, confidentiality, instructions, SCOA and its role, and contact details.
A	About you	Geographical location, age, gender, country of birth, languages spoken, lived experience.
B	Your employment status	Occupation, work area, work setting, work roles, employment contract, full-time/part-time status, extra hours/overtime, flexible work arrangements, and income.
C	Your work history	Work experience in the settlement sector, work experience outside the settlement sector, years working in current organisation/settlement sector, first role in settlement sector, prior sector of employment, reasons for settlement sector turnover.
D	Your role as a settlement worker	Main role, any other roles, direct/non-direct client contact activities.
E	Qualifications & Professional Growth	Educational qualifications (e.g. general, specialist), professional development access, and professional development needs.
F	Supervision	Practice/clinical supervision, line management and other supervision.

Respondents were able to answer as much or as little as they wanted but were encouraged to complete the full survey to support a better understanding of the settlement sector, its strengths, and its needs. For some questions that had been identified as key to support a better understanding of the sector, if left unanswered, respondents received a nudge to complete them before moving to the next page. They were able to choose to return to the question and complete it or move on.

### 3. Results and discussion

This report focuses on the Workers Survey which provides the main source of data. We then used the Organisation Survey together with a process of peer-validation (through Working Group 4 of the Road to Belonging and the SCOA Board) to validate that the Workers' Survey was broadly accurate and representative.

Results are presented with a combination of absolute values, proportions and percentages. Proportions have been calculated using the total number of responses to each question.

All collected data has been through a thorough process of data cleaning to ensure that data is consistent, structured and accurate. Through that process, we have removed accidental duplicates, and identified and corrected structural errors and inconsistencies (e.g. typographical errors, capitalisation, abbreviation and formatting).

We also undertook a validation process to ensure data is accurate and to check that it is representative of the settlement workforce. Preliminary results were presented and verified by Working Group 4 who validated the preliminary results and provided supporting evidence corroborating the results while contributing to understanding the results.

Completion of the survey being voluntary, the number of responses varies throughout the survey with a majority of questions completed by a high proportion of respondents, however the number of responses is not consistent throughout the survey.

#### 3.1 Total number of responses

A total of 515 responses were collected from the National Settlement Workforce Workers Survey.

There is currently no data available that could correlate the total number of responses with the size of the national settlement workforce. Nonetheless the data quality and a representativeness check indicate that 515 is a reliable sample.

#### 3.2 Location of workers

Responses (n=435) were collected from all states and territories, with a majority of workers (43%) located in New South Wales. Most workers (75%) are working in metropolitan areas as shown in Figure 2. Responses by state and territory are presented in Figure 1 from the highest total number of respondents to the lowest.

Through the review and validation process, it was suggested that the overall data is reflective of the settlement workforce with New South Wales and Victoria having the highest number of workers, with settlement services generally being located where there are larger populations of migrants and refugees. The group also noted a potential bias in the survey whereby the results may partially reflect the promotional efforts from involved services.

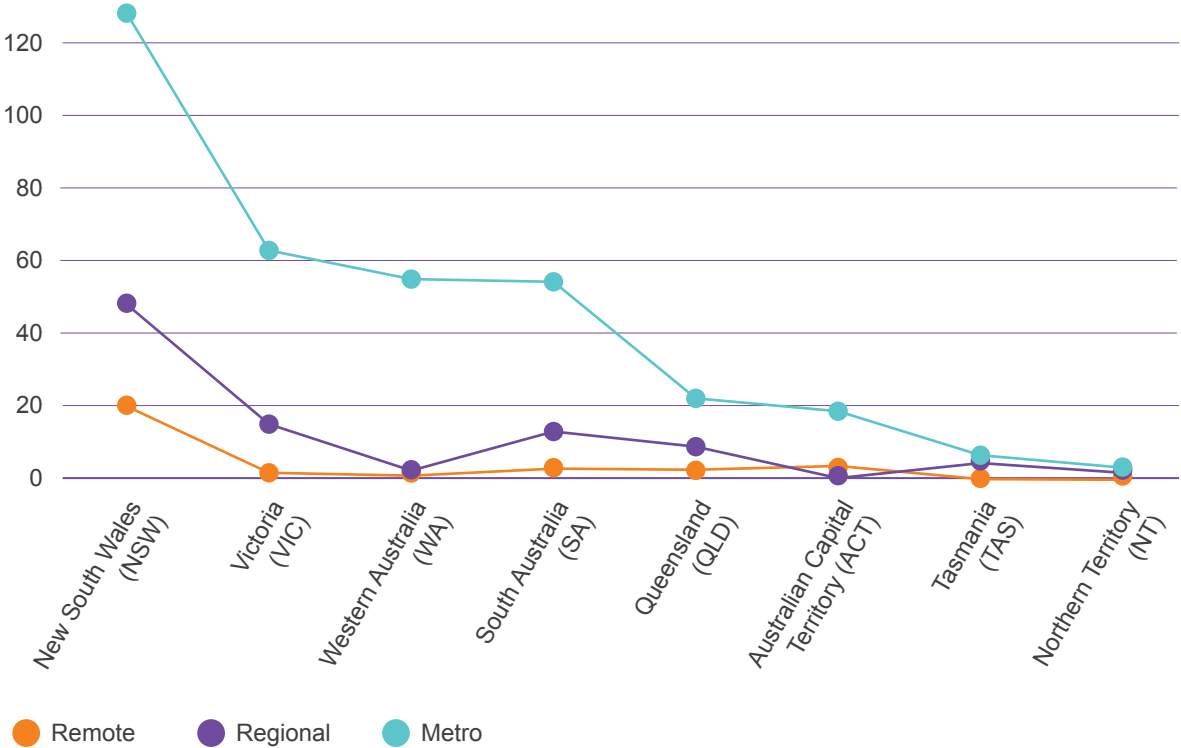
#### 3.3 Programs delivered

Of the respondents (n=437), most were working for the Humanitarian Settlement Program (HSP) (48%), followed by the Settlement Engagement and Transition Support (SETS) Program (31%), the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) (10%), others (10%) and the Youth Transition Support Program (YTSP) (1%). Based on funding allocation and size of programs, the AMEP is likely under-represented in this sample.

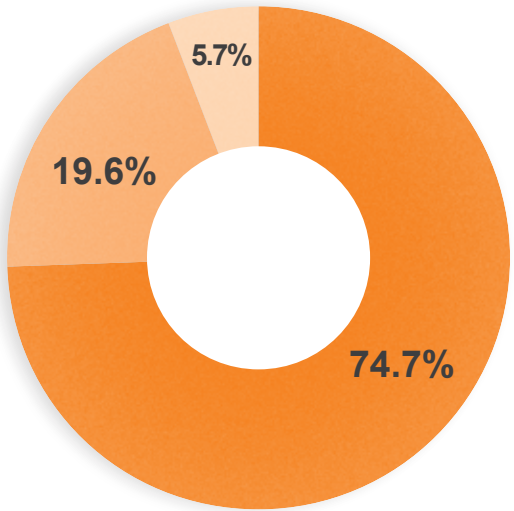
Table 2: Distribution of workers within each state and territory

State/territory	Metro	Regional	Remote
NSW	66%	24%	10%
VIC	81%	18%	1%
WA	98%	2%	0%
SA	79%	18%	3%
QLD	70%	27%	3%
ACT	79%	8%	13%
TAS	60%	40%	0%
NT	50%	50%	0%

**Figure 1: Distribution of total number of national settlement workforce per state and territory**

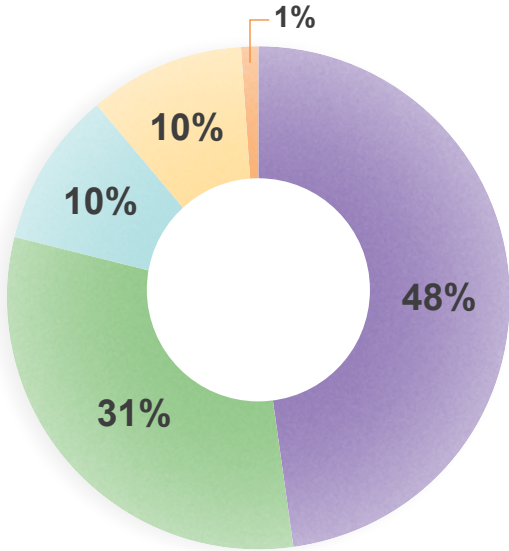


**Figure 2: Distribution of proportion of respondents per setting types (metro, regional, rural)**



- Metro
- Regional
- Remote

**Figure 3: Distribution of respondents across program type**



- Humanitarian Settlement Programs (HSP)
- Settlement Engagement and Transition Support (SETS)
- Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP)
- Other
- Youth Transition Support Program (YTSP)

### 3.4 Demographics of the workforce

Respondents were asked about their age, gender, cultural background, country of birth, and lived experiences.

#### 3.4.1 Age

Of the respondents (n=435), most respondents were aged between 35-44 years old (29.9%), followed by slightly lower proportions of workers aged 45-54 and 25-34. Figure 4 shows the distribution of respondents across the different age groups.

#### 3.4.2 Gender

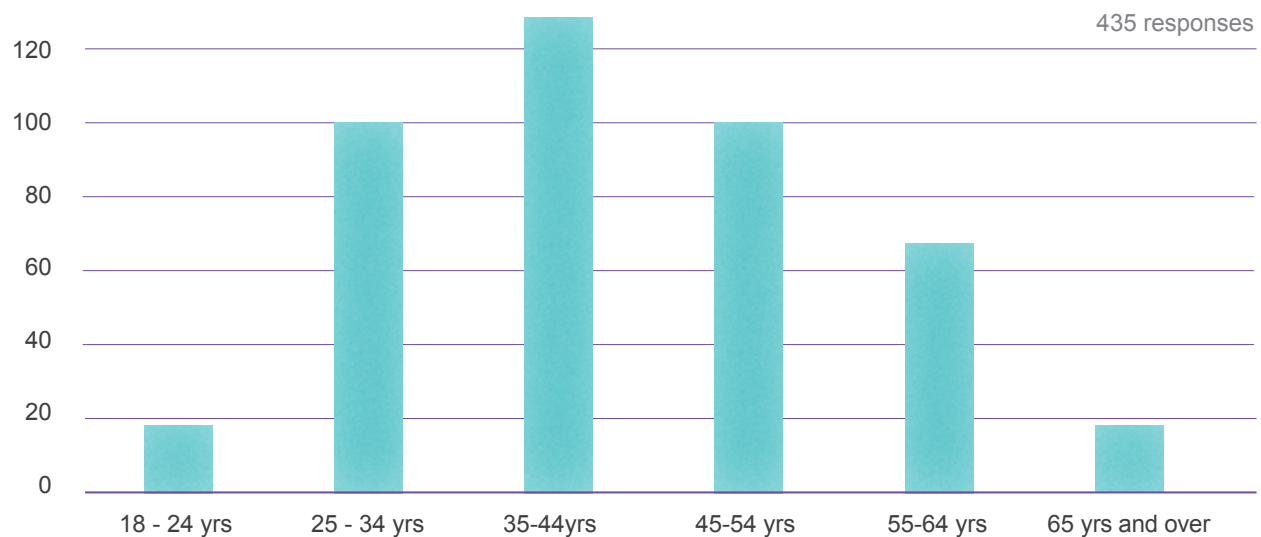
Of the responses (n=434), 70% were female and 29% male, and the remaining ≤ 1% of respondents preferred not to say. The survey included 'Non-binary' and 'Self-described' as part of the list of possible answers, however both options had no responses.

#### 3.4.3 Cultural and linguistic diversity

Of the respondents (n=432), the key characteristics of the cultural and linguistic diversity of the survey respondents were:

- 75% of workers stated that they use a language other than English for work, with 36% stating they did so 'on a regular basis' and 34% 'on occasion' (Figure 7).
- The majority of the survey respondents (76%) were born in a country other than Australia (Figure 6).
- 75% spoke a language other than English at home. The most cited languages included: Arabic, Dari, Farsi, Nepali, and Urdu.

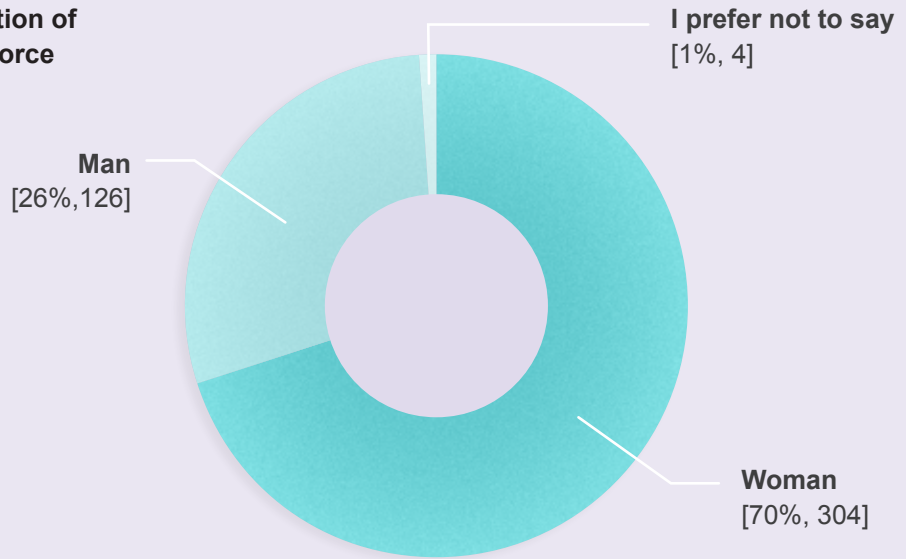
**Figure 4: Age distribution of national settlement workforce**



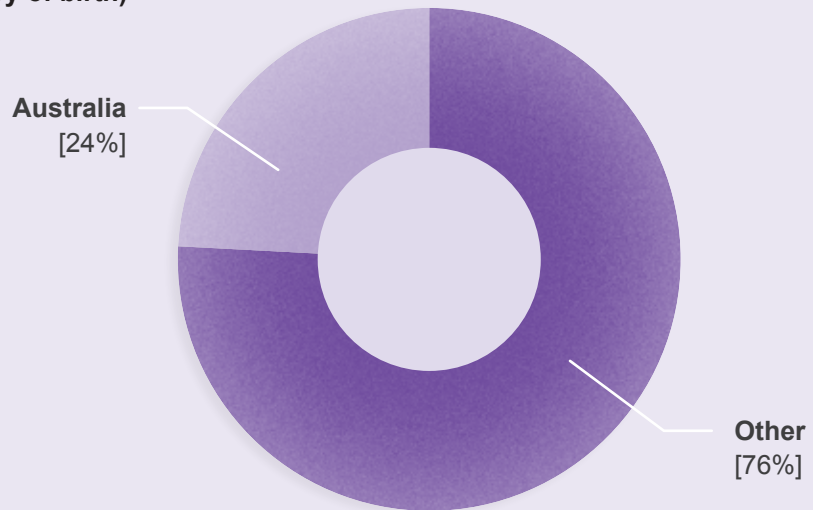
**Table 3: Percentages of workers for each age group**

18-24 yrs	4%
25-34 yrs	23%
35-44 yrs	30%
45-54 yrs	23%
55-64 yrs	16%
65 yrs	4%

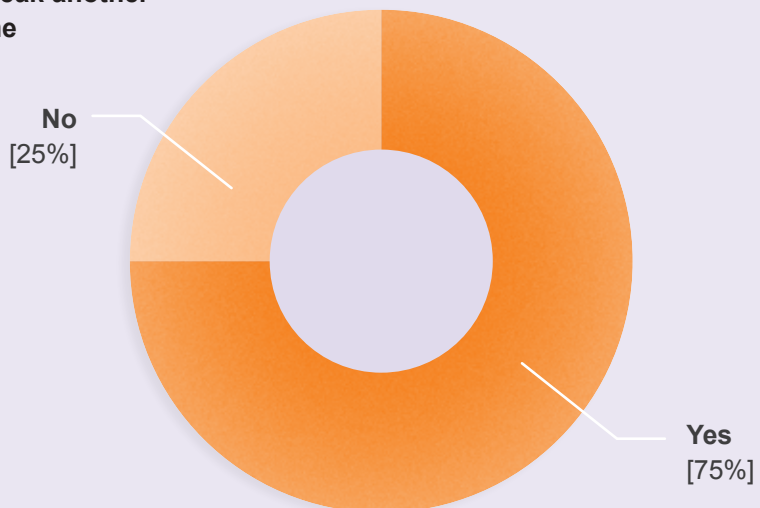
**Figure 5: Gender distribution of national settlement workforce**



**Figure 6: Distribution of respondents' (n=429) nationality (country of birth)**



**Figure 7: Distribution of respondents (n=432) when asked if they speak another language than English at home**



### 3.5 Lived experience of migration or forced displacement

The Workforce Profile survey included a question about the lived experience of settlement workers in Australia. The survey provided a definition of 'lived experience' which was: *“For the purpose of this survey, lived experience refers to someone who has the same cultural background or similar migration/refugee experience to the people they work with. This would usually include someone who has experienced migration or forced displacement.”*

Of all respondents (n=428), 78% reported having lived experience or having a family member who has.

- 51% of respondents identified as having lived experience of migration to Australia themselves;
- 13% as having a family member who has lived experience of migration to Australia;
- 9% identified as having experienced forced displacement;
- 5% had a family member who experienced forced displacement.
- 19% of respondents did not identify as having lived experience.

The contributions of workers with lived experience are recognised as integral to service delivery in the settlement sector. The survey included an opportunity for workers to explain how their lived experience has influenced their work with clients (Question 9). Responses included mentions of:

- having a greater understanding of the challenges faced by migrants as well as their needs;
- improving their ability to better support clients; and
- a better understanding of the settlement experience and the impact it can have on families and clients.

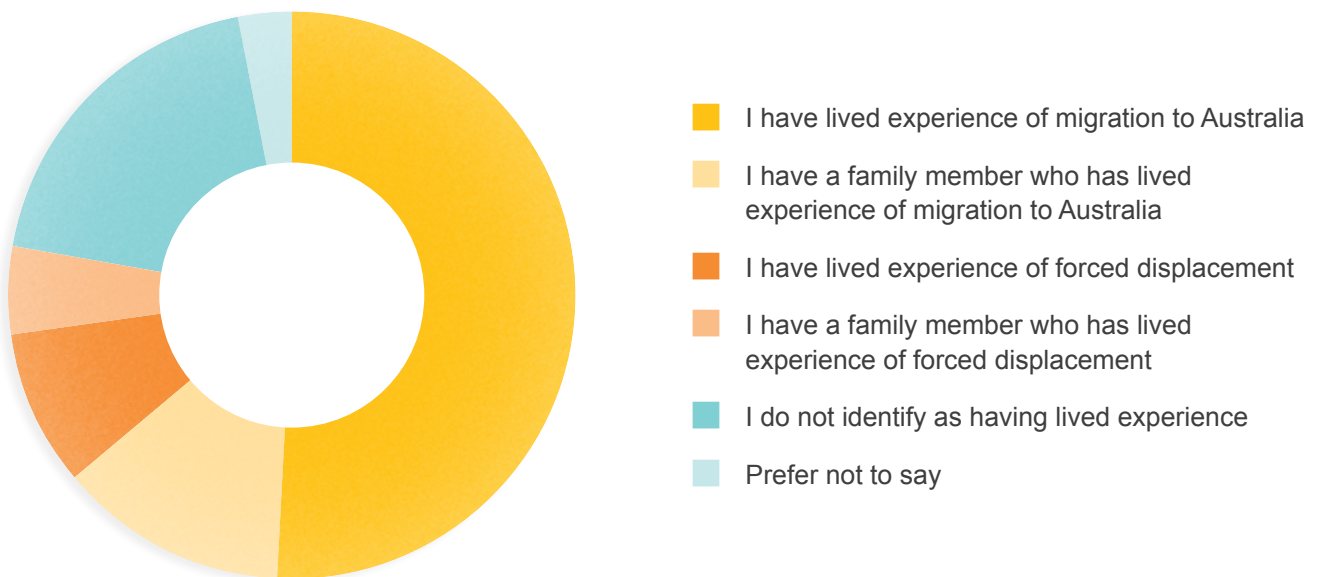
### 3.6 Job roles

#### 3.6.1 Main role

As shown in Table 4, of all respondents (n=388), most workers are settlement-specific case managers (18%), followed by settlement-specific case workers (13%) and managers (12%).

Table 4 and Figure 9 show each of the top ten main roles and the proportion of respondents who reported having lived experience or having a family member who has, and respondents who do not identify as having lived experience.

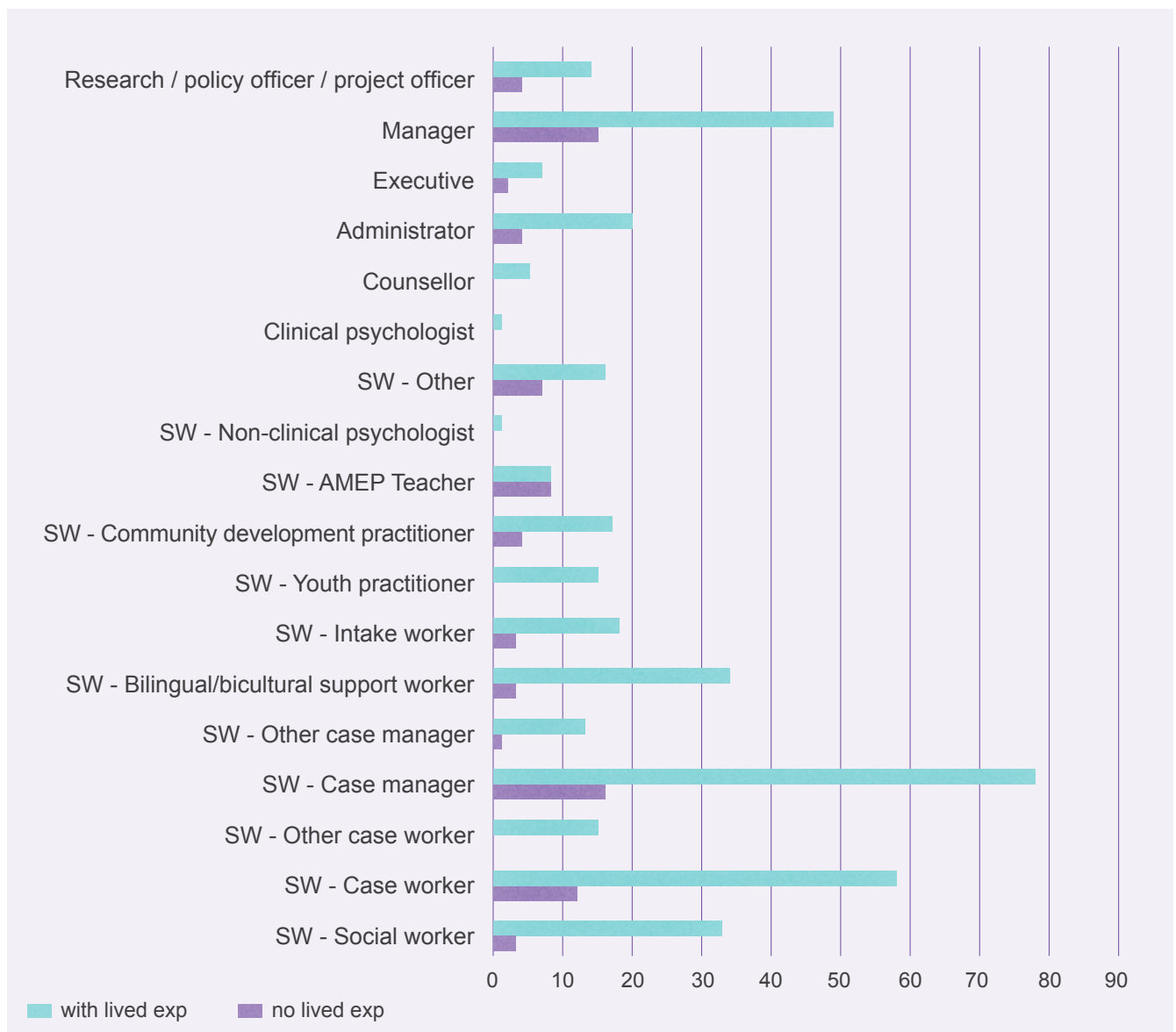
**Figure 8: Lived experience distribution for the national settlement workforce**



**Table 4: Respondents' main role**

Rank	Role	%	No lived exp	Lived exp
1	Settlement worker (SW) – case manager	18%	17%	83%
2	Settlement worker (SW) – case worker	13%	17%	83%
3	Manager	12%	23%	77%
4	Other	9%	32%	68%
5	Settlement worker (SW) – bilingual/bicultural support worker	7%	8%	92%
6	Settlement worker (SW) – social worker	7%	8%	92%
7	Administrator	5%	17%	83%
8	Settlement worker (SW) - other	5%	30%	70%
9	Settlement worker (SW) - intake worker	4%	14%	86%
10	Settlement worker (SW) - community dev practitioner	4%	19%	81%

**Figure 9: Distribution of respondents' main role and lived experience**



\* SW stands for Settlement Worker specific role

### 3.6.2 Direct-client contact activities

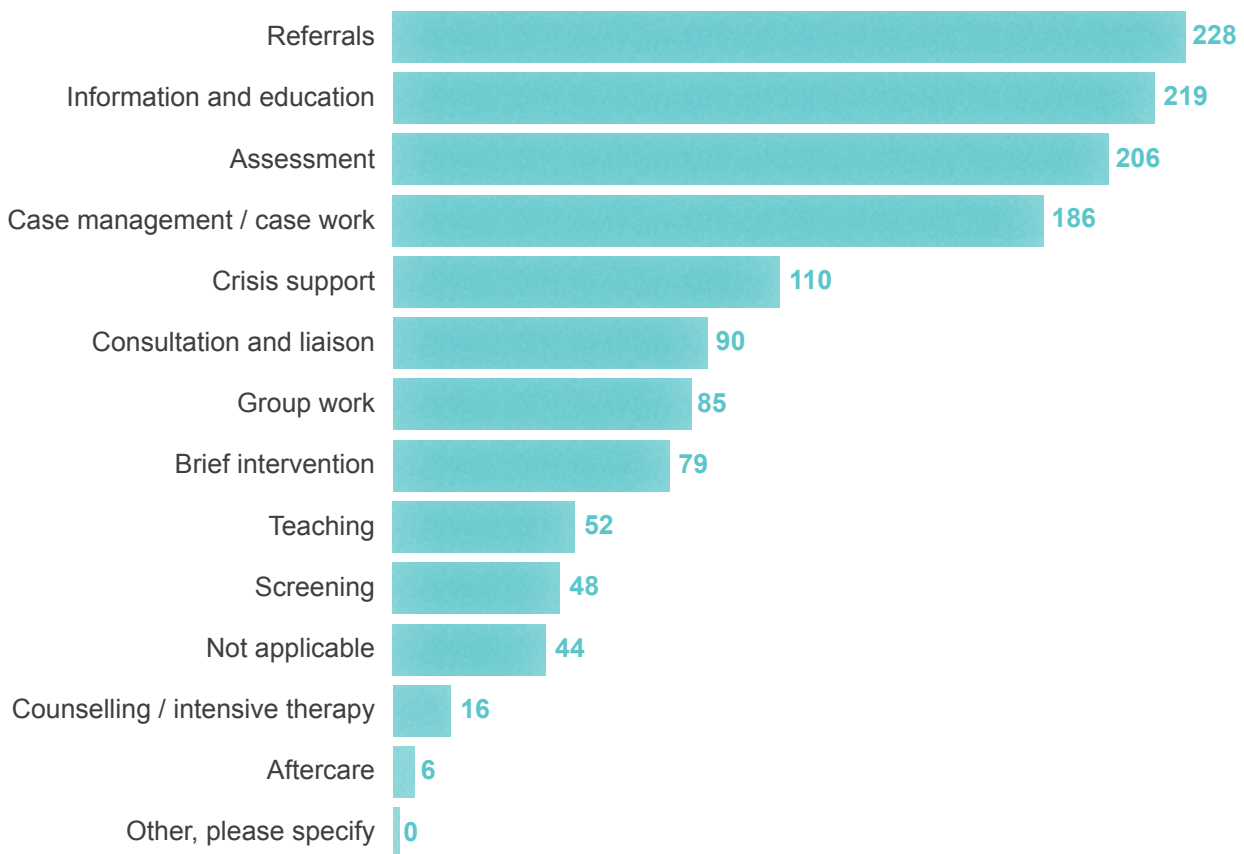
Of all responses (n=359), workers who worked in a direct client service role were asked to identify the five activities on which they spent most of their time. They reported the following activities:

- Referrals: 16%
- Information and education: 16%
- Assessment: 15%
- Case management/casework: 13%
- Crisis support: 8%

These results reflect the nature of settlement services and their navigation role where they support newly arrived people in understanding and navigating the Australian system to access the various health, finance, education and other services they would require.

This question specifically focused on direct client facing activities, and did not ask about administrative tasks such as reporting.

**Figure 10: Breakdown of activities on which workers (in direct client service role) spent most of their time**





### 3.7 Employment status

#### 3.7.1 Employment type

Of all respondents (n=430), most respondents (72%) reported being employed on a full-time basis while 28% were employed on a part-time basis.

In terms of contractual status, 47% were on a permanent contract, 45% on a fixed-term contract, 6% on a casual contract and 2% were volunteers. The low proportion of workers on casual contracts could potentially be associated with the recent changes to the Fair Work Act which, among other things, required employers to offer conversion from casual to permanent employment after 12 months of employment. These changes could have also impacted the proportion of workers on fixed-term contracts.

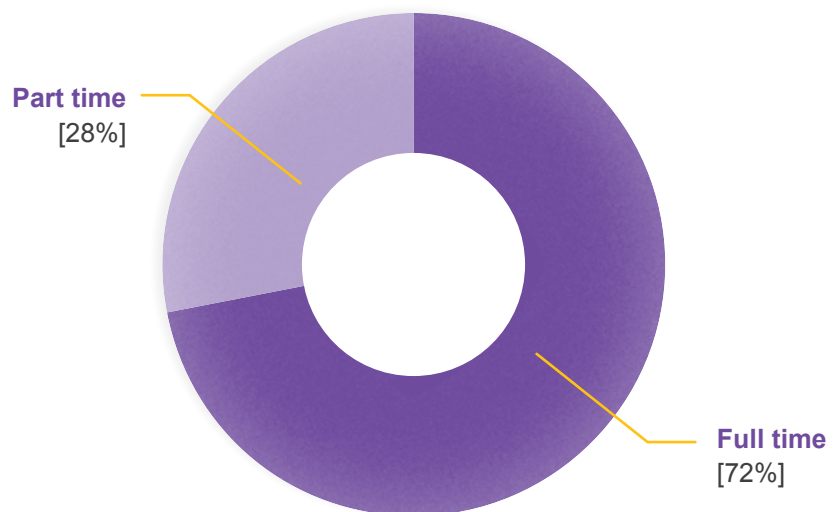
#### 3.7.2 Remuneration

In the survey, workers were asked to nominate their income category; i.e. fortnightly personal income (or annual income, p.a.). When all types of employment are considered, the average fortnightly income of all respondents (n=423) is \$3,000-\$3,995 (or \$78,214 - \$104,259 p.a.).

In comparison, the national average fortnightly income for all employees is \$2,865.20 (as of Nov 2023, from the Australian Bureau of Statistics<sup>2</sup>). When considered separately, for full-time employment, the average income is lower than the national average; while for part-time employment the average fortnightly income is higher than the national average.

There are a range of complex factors that could be driving these results, and this is an area requiring further exploration. For example, the higher income of part-time employees could be reflective of a higher concentration of part-time employment in management roles; the higher than average salaries could be a result of workers possessing a complex skillset that is difficult to attract and retain; and lower than average full-time employment could be an indication of funding not keeping up with wage growth. However, there is insufficient data in the survey to draw any firm conclusions relating to the drivers of remuneration patterns.

**Figure 11: Distribution of employment types**



<sup>2</sup> <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/labour/earnings-and-working-conditions/average-weekly-earnings-australia/latest-release>

### 3.8. Work history

#### 3.8.1: Experience working in the settlement sector

As shown in Figure 12, the average years working in the settlement sector (anywhere in Australia) was 7.3 years, with 43% of respondents having worked for less than 5 years, and 35% for 10 years or more.

Of all respondents (n=418), 48% reported their current position was their first role in the settlement sector.

When asked about the factors that encouraged them to continue working in the settlement sector, responses were generally positive and included comments such as:

*I love to empower, make a difference to people's lives, support them and see them flourish and grow in their lives and be self-reliant.*

*Provides employment opportunities for people from diverse cultural backgrounds.*

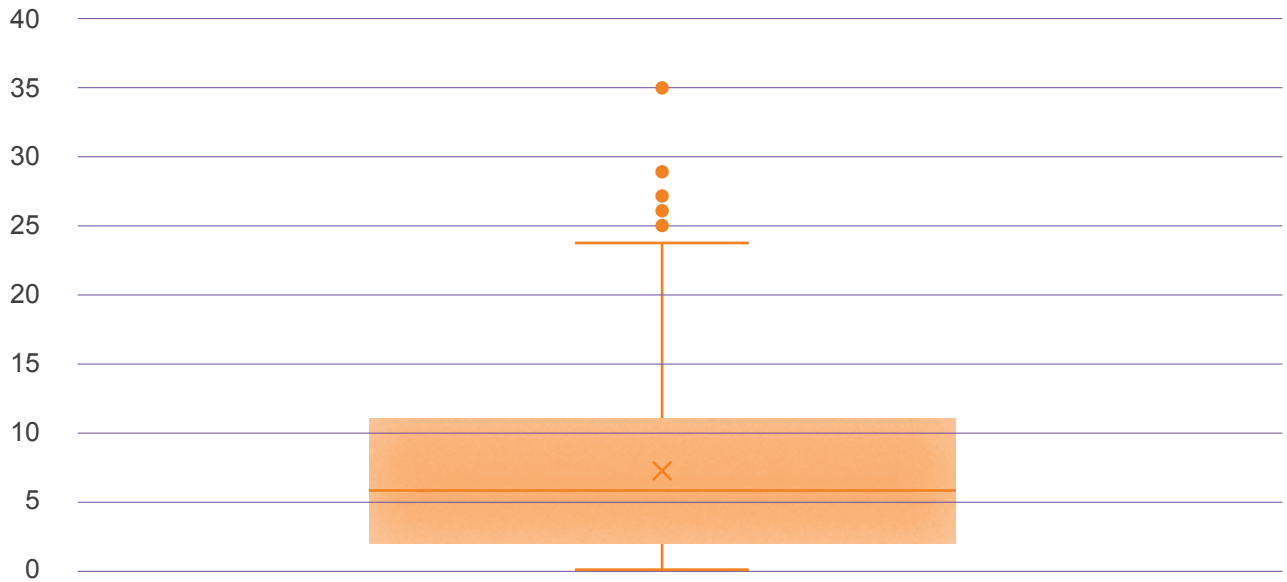
*The work is aligned with my values and interests, its never dull.*

*I love my job and to make others happy around me. Here I have an opportunity to use all gained skills and change the pathways of our clients' settlement, [make it] easier and encourage them to achieve their goals due to our mentoring.*

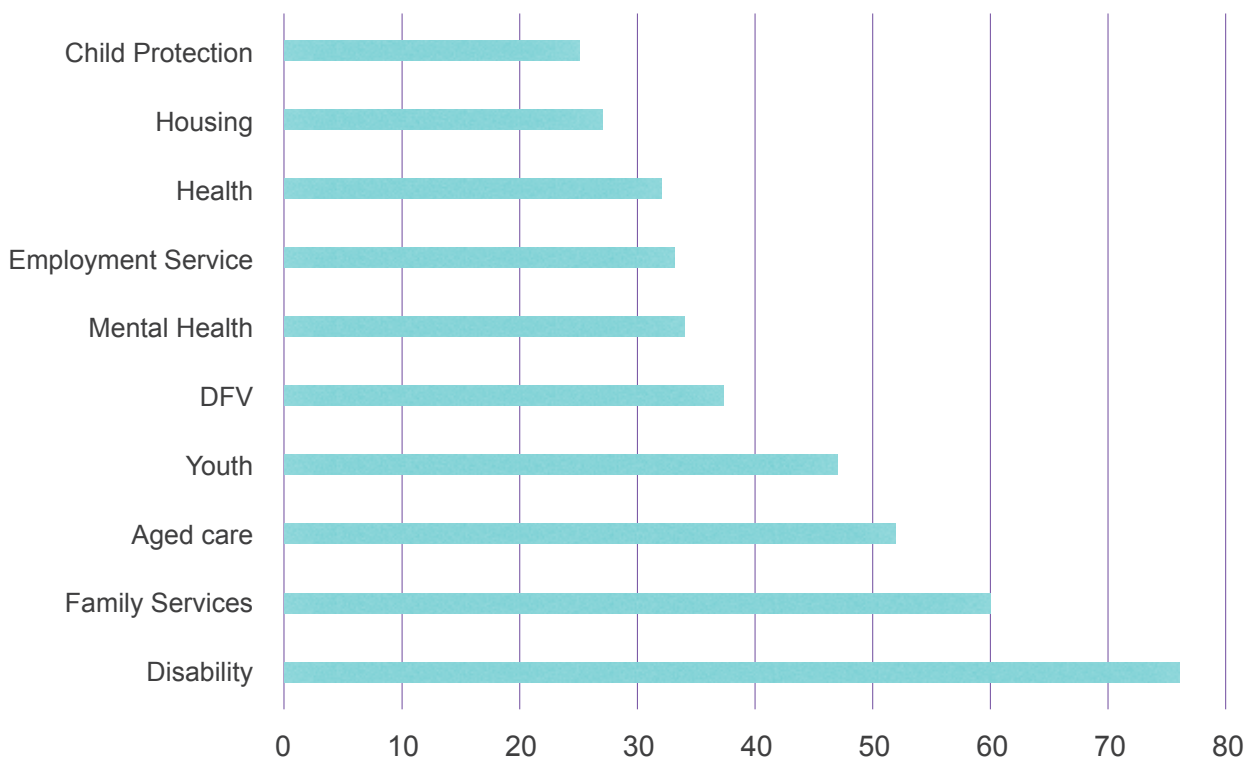
#### 3.8.2: Experience working outside the settlement sector

Respondents (n=228) who have worked outside the settlement sector were from a variety of backgrounds; with disability (33%), family services (26%), and aged care (23%) being the most reported.

**Figure 12: Distribution of respondents' (n=409) years of experience working in the settlement sector (anywhere in Australia)**



**Figure 13: Distribution of respondents' background if worked outside the settlement sector**



### 3.9 Qualifications

Workers were asked to describe the qualifications that they had completed—many workers had multiple qualifications in different areas of study.

When asked about their qualifications, of all respondents (n=345), 97% of workers held at least a year 12 or college certificate.

Respondents described the levels and types of qualifications they had as follows:

- 68% had qualifications in Community Services; and
- 83% had qualifications in other relevant areas (such as health, social and behavioural sciences, TESOL, or teaching).

Of those with qualifications in Community Services, (n=328) their levels of qualification were:

- Diploma (CHC52021): 31.8%
- Certificate IV (CH42021): 11.8%
- Other: 11.1%
- Advance Diploma of Community Sector Management (CHC62015): 5.3%
- Certificate III (CHC32015): 5%

Of those with qualifications in other relevant areas, (n=326) their levels of qualification were:

- Bachelor degree: 29.4%
- Masters degree: 20: 11.7%
- Diploma: 5.6%
- Certificate IV: 5.6%

### 3.10 Professional development priorities

Respondents were asked to select the training and professional development gaps for themselves and for the settlement sector in relation to particular client groups and particular areas of work practice.

The top five training gaps for the settlement sector (n=265) in relation to particular **areas of practice** were:

1. Managing risky behaviours (e.g. aggression, suicide, self-harm)
2. Responding to multiple and complex needs (e.g. dual diagnosis, trauma, domestic and family violence)
3. Keeping up-to-date on settlement and migration issues
4. Clinical skills for counselling
5. Service delivery/admin skills (e.g. policy, funding applications, financial planning)

The top five training gaps for the settlement sector (n=291) in relation to particular **client groups** were:

1. Clients with drug and alcohol issues
2. LGBTIQ+ clients
3. Clients with gambling problems
4. Clients with experience of trauma
5. Older clients

### 3.11 Supervision

Workers were asked about the types of supervision they received, the frequency of supervision received, and who provided supervision (someone internal to the organisation, external to the organisation, or both).

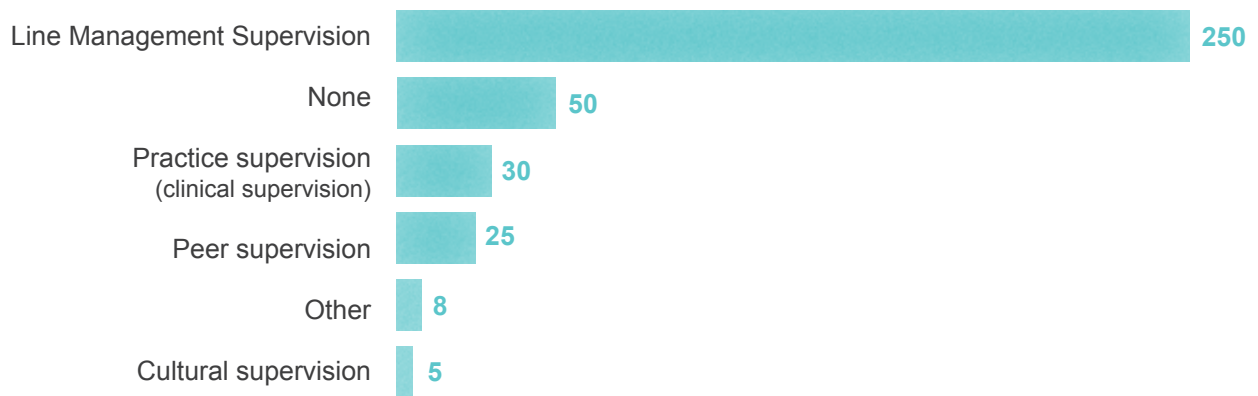
#### 3.11.1 Type of supervision

Of all respondents (n=368), most (68%) said they receive line management supervision, followed by no supervision (14%). Figure 14 shows the different types of supervision.

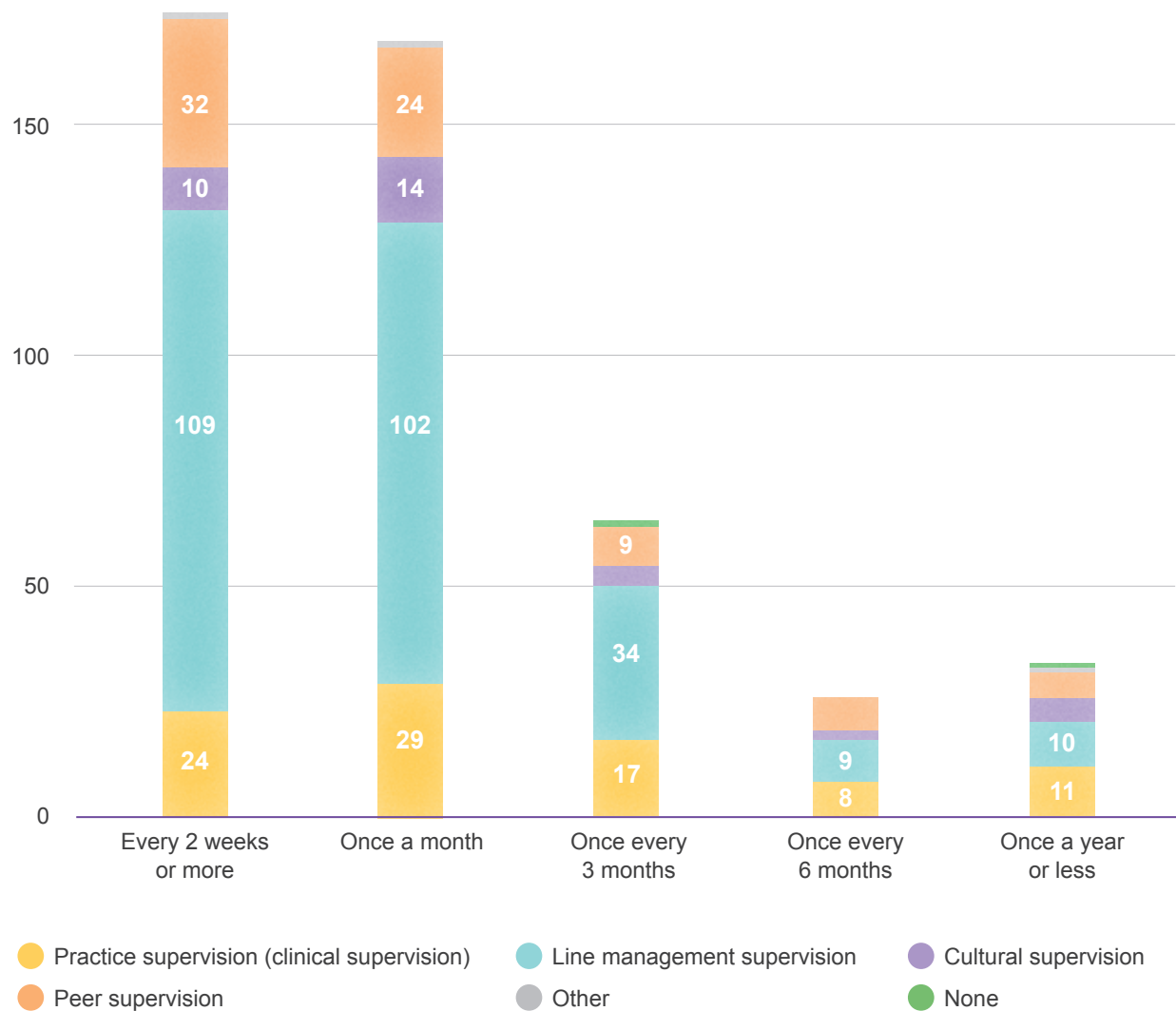
#### 3.11.2 Frequency of supervision

Of all respondents (n=299), most said they receive supervision every 2 weeks or more as shown in Figure 15.

**Figure 14: Distribution of supervision type**



**Figure 15: Distribution of supervision frequency**



## 4. Conclusion

The primary resource of settlement services is its workforce. This report shows the workforce is diverse, skilled, educated and experienced. Given the high levels of lived experience, the workforce is both a reflection of, and an asset to, achieving positive settlement outcomes.

The original instigator of this report was the body of work under the *Road to Belonging Strategy* to support workforce and organisational capacity. While this report is informative in its own right, the results will also be put to good use to support the settlement workforce. The data collected will be used by Working Group Four of the *Road to Belonging Strategy* to design and develop a training package and a National Settlement Qualification Strategy. This report ensures that next steps are grounded in a strong evidence-base, and aligned to the strengths and needs of Australia's settlement workers.

Maintaining and further supporting the settlement workforce is critical to addressing future challenges, and ensuring we provide best-practice and consistent services to migrant and refugee communities. The findings presented in this report are not only a reflection of a workforce, but of some of Australia's most critical infrastructure for supporting our successful multiculturalism.

With both the migration and humanitarian intakes increasing, Australia is set to welcome approximately 1 million people over the next five years.

**In the face of increased migration it is more important than ever that this sector be as optimised as possible to welcome new arrivals.**

Future repeats of the National Settlement Workforce Profile will ensure that progress is monitored and that we can continue to build the capacity of the settlement workforce. A diverse, qualified, competent and experienced workforce that is fully funded and appropriately remunerated to ensure quality program delivery, will ensure Australia is best placed to meet the needs of migrant and refugee communities.







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