



Settlement
Council
of Australia

Principles for conducting research with migrant and refugee communities

Settlement Council of Australia

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The Settlement Council of Australia acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land on which we operate, the Ngunnawal people. We also acknowledge the traditional custodians of the various lands on which migrants and refugees settle across Australia, and on which our sector operates.

We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging and celebrate the diversity of Aboriginal peoples and their ongoing cultures and connections to our lands and waters.

About the Settlement Council of Australia

The Settlement Council of Australia is the peak body representing Australia's migrant and refugee services and allied organisations. We provide leadership to the settlement sector and broader society to enable people of migrant and refugee backgrounds to experience positive settlement outcomes. We represent over 130 member organisations nationally, all working towards a shared vision for an Australia where all people of migrant and refugee backgrounds belong, thrive and experience fulfilling lives.

Introduction

This document outlines a set of guiding principles to enhance research and advocacy efforts within the migration and refugee sector. The principles were developed by a group of organisations that work with migrant and refugee communities and are based on their experiences in conducting research and partnering with academic institutions. They are designed to complement standard ethics processes required by universities and organisations involved in research. This document provides a supplementary framework specifically tailored to address the unique challenges and responsibilities associated with research involving migrants and refugees.

These principles outline how we as a sector commit to going about research and advocacy informed by the right ethic, and make clear the standards we expect of our research partners. By adhering to these principles, stakeholders can foster meaningful partnerships, drive impactful change, and enhance the wellbeing and rights of migrants and refugees. This collaborative effort between researchers, community organisations, and affected individuals bridges the gap between grassroots initiatives and policy-making processes, ultimately aiming to make for better and more useful research.

Principles

- 1. Community-Centred Research:** Research topics must be chosen based on the needs and interests identified by migrants and refugees themselves, ensuring that their voices and perspectives are central to the research process. Research should incorporate anecdotal information from day-to-day service delivery to challenge traditional notions of research evidence.
- 2. Impactful Outcomes:** Research endeavours should have a reasonable prospect of leading to positive change and tangible improvements in the lives of migrants and refugees.
- 3. Lived Experience Leadership:** The research process should be guided by migrants and refugees, involving them from the design stage to the dissemination of findings, ensuring lived experience leadership throughout. Promote interactive dialogue between migrants and refugees and researchers to emphasise the importance of their active participation. Acknowledge migrant and refugee contributions through co-authorship of academic papers and reports as appropriate. Ensure that everyone involved in the research benefits in some way, such as through financial compensation, co-authorship, and access to professional networks and learning.
- 4. Consideration for Pertinence of Research Questions and Existence of Similar Research:** Researchers should consider the pertinence of their research questions and explore the existence of similar studies. Research should also encompass a comprehensive scope to avoid inflated findings.
- 5. Equitable Representation in Research:** Over-consultation of particular communities can inadvertently lead to skewed results, reinforcing existing biases and neglecting the diverse perspectives of underrepresented communities. Researchers should strive for inclusivity by actively seeking input from a wide range of individuals, ensuring that the voices of marginalised and harder-to-reach groups are heard.

6. **Fair Compensation:** When research involves community organisations and participants, they should be adequately compensated for their valuable contributions.
7. **Culturally Sensitive Methods:** Utilise culturally sensitive and appropriate research methods that honour and encompass the diverse backgrounds, experiences, and identities of all participants.
8. **Equitable Partnerships:** Recognise power dynamics between researchers and migrant and refugee research partners and participants , promoting equitable partnerships that value and respect the knowledge and expertise of all stakeholders.
9. **Ethical and Legal Compliance:** Research should be conducted in accordance with ethical and legal guidelines and standards to ensure integrity and trustworthiness. This includes ensuring the safety and wellbeing of participants, and ensuring informed consent is obtained from all participants. In navigating ethical and legal compliance, care should be taken to tailor compliance in a way that is meaningful to the participants (for example, making informed consent processes simple and comprehensible).
10. **Dissemination of Information:** Ensure findings are reviewed by individuals with practice experience and people with lived experience. Share findings with migrants and refugees and relevant stakeholders in a manner that is accessible, culturally sensitive, and respectful. Invest in the advocacy work required for the research to contribute to meaningful change.