

Housing a barrier to settlement

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In Australia's competitive private housing market, the chances of securing a property without references or a hefty bond are slim to none.

Coupled with [language barriers](#), refugees and [asylum seekers](#) face significant challenges in their quest for a place to call home.

The little known impacts of [housing](#)-induced stress on the health, wellbeing and [social inclusion](#) of refugees and asylum seekers is now being explored in a new Flinders University study.

Funded by the Australian Research Council, the study will document the housing experiences of refugees and asylum seekers in a bid to identify what particular barriers to permanent housing cause the most significant health impacts, and to understand how these adverse effects vary among different groups, including single mothers, young men and large families.

"There are more than 20,000 asylum seekers living in communities without the right to work, which means they can't earn money to afford private rentals," Flinders University Associate Professor Anna Ziersch, the study's lead investigator, said.

"Refugees also face such issues as overcrowding; language barriers; inappropriate housing for their physical or cultural needs; and discrimination in the [housing market](#)," she said.

"It can be quite competitive out there and some refugees may not have a

reference outside of Anglicare, which supports them in the first six months before they move into the private rental market, and many of them don't have enough bond money.

"But while the barriers have been well documented, we don't know what aspects are particularly difficult, and to what groups, and the effects on health, which is what we're trying to find out."

The two-year study, *Belonging at home: Promoting social inclusion among asylum seekers and people from refugee backgrounds*, will be conducted in partnership with AnglicareSA, Baptist Care SA, Shelter SA and the Australian Refugee Association. Flinders University Associate Professor Kathy Arthurson is also a chief investigator on the project.

Associate Professor Ziersch, a Senior Research Fellow at Flinders Southgate Institute for Health, Society and Equity, said the research will involve surveys; in-depth interviews with refugees, asylum seekers and service providers; as well as a photo-based exercise where [refugees](#) will take photos of their house and neighbourhood, and discuss what aspects they do or do not like.

Findings of the study, she said, will provide evidence to support policy-makers and service providers to develop innovative responses to promote sustainable housing solutions, social inclusion and good health.

"Housing is the keystone of settlement – it's a really crucial part of belonging in a new country and if you get that right, you've given people a great start."

Provided by Flinders University

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